

Summer
1996

ViceVersa

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Toronto

Montréal

New York

52

**The Montreal's
Festival du
Nouveau Cinéma
is in New York!**

An Interview
With its Director
Claude
Chamberlan

**HOT WRITERS
IN THE TRIANGLE**

**Three Cities
in a Tale**

**SPECIAL SECTION
PAGES 11 TO 38**

William Anselmi
Jorge Luis Camacho
Jean-François Chassay
Pete Feinberg
Joe Fiorito
Jean Pierre Girard
Corrado Paina
Fabiola Pardo
Leonard Schulman
Robert M. Smith
Russell Smith

Atanas
Georgiev
Stoilov
**Le prix
du refuge**

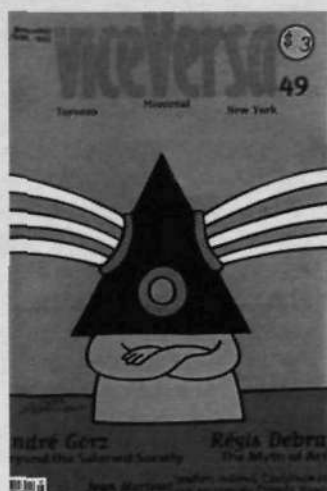




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VITTORIO
VITTORIO
VITTORIO
OUR FIRST
COVER
FOR THE
TRIANGLE
GRAZIE!

viceVersa

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QUANTUM POLITICS

The forces which gave birth to industrial civilization fought hard against the ideas championing social justice, while those same forces also alleged that ideas of social justice were a vehicle for a materialist and vulgar view of life.

One of the apparent paradoxes of modern times is that those forces have themselves subsequently become instrumental in the Triumph of materialism, of injustice and vulgarity. So, is the game over?

We shouldn't think so. But then how can the political domain be transformed? Solitary explorers have been looking for the political *quantum* since the remotest past. Just as the world in which classical physics applies is also the world of quantum physics! It's the optic, the level of visualization which must change. Classical politics is naturalistic: it has its roots in common sense which views human beings as accomplished, immutable and isolated. A being whose ties with the Universe have been severed. *Quantum politics* reintroduces the Universe with all its possibilities and the countless variables of life which in the final analysis, are also those of politics.

Today we see that science, by involuntarily discovering the great complexity of matter, has again cast itself into the role of philosophy. Thus, it discloses to our eyes a considerable quantity of *hidden* qualities that common sense used to consider "immaterial", if not "spiritual".

These qualities are human qualities, too. There is no meta-physics but one single enigmatic nature that politics can no longer afford to ignore. *Quantum politics* therefore reclaims the totality of the Human and puts it back on the social territory of the city by trying to solve — beyond the rift between individual and citizen — the conundrum of extreme human alienation.

But, in practice, how can this process be speeded up and make life into something other than a mercantile, insurable and pensionable commodity? How is one to meet and coordinate action in the

Le forze che hanno prodotto la civiltà industriale hanno combattuto in tutti i modi le idee di giustizia sociale sostenendo anche, a un certo momento, che queste idee erano portatrici di una visione materialistica e volgare della vita. Uno degli apparenti paradossi della modernità è che proprio quelle forze si sono dimostrate in seguito responsabili del trionfo del materialismo, dell'ingiustizia e della volgarità.

Allora "les jeux sont faits?" Si deve credere di no.

Ma come rinnovare il politico?

Alcuni solitari sono partiti, in epoche anche lontane, alla ricerca del *quantum* politico. Il mondo della fisica classica è lo stesso mondo della fisica quantistica, così anche la politica nuova si fa sul terreno della vecchia. E' il modo di vedere, il livello che cambia. La politica classica è naturalistica: si fonda sul senso comune, su un essere umano considerato come compiuto, immutabile e isolato. Un essere alla cui definizione è stato sottratto l'Universo intero. La *politica quantistica* reintroduce l'Universo con tutte le possibilità e le infinite variabili della vita che sono poi le stesse della politica.

Oggi tutti vedono che la scienza, scoprendo involontariamente l'incredibile complessità della materia, ridiviene quello che era: filosofia. Infinite qualità nascoste, che fino a poco fa il senso comune riteneva "immateriali", se non "spirituali", si rivelano come qualità anche umane. Non esiste meta-fisica, ma una natura enigmatica che la politica non può più permettersi di ignorare. La *politica quantistica* allora recupera la totalità dell'Uomo e la porta sul terreno della città disponendosi così a risolvere, oltre la separazione tra individuo e cittadino, l'estrema alienazione umana.

Ma praticamente che fare per accelerare questo processo e fare della vita più che un bene mercantile, assicurabile, pensionabile?

Incontrarsi e concertare interventi sociali dove si affermi la nuova sensibilità.

Les forces qui sont à l'origine de la civilisation industrielle se sont battues avec acharnement contre les idées de justice sociale et elles ont soutenu aussi, à un moment donné, que ces idées étaient porteuses d'une vision matérialiste et vulgaire de la vie. L'un des paradoxes apparents de la modernité c'est que ces mêmes forces ont été, par la suite, responsables du triomphe du *matérialisme*, de l'injustice et de la vulgarité. Alors, les jeux sont faits? Nous devons croire que non. Mais comment renouveler le politique? D'aucuns sont partis en solitaire, déjà dans le passé lointain, à la recherche du *quantum* politique. De même que le monde de la physique classique est celui de la physique quantique, le renouvellement du politique se produit sur le terrain de tous les jours. C'est l'optique, le niveau qui changent. La politique classique est naturaliste: elle puise dans le sens commun qui renvoie à un être humain considéré accompli, immuable et isolé. Un être dont les liens avec l'Univers ont été coupés. La politique quantique introduit à nouveau l'Univers avec toutes les possibilités et les variables infinies de la vie, lesquelles, finalement, sont les mêmes que celles de la politique de tous les jours. Aujourd'hui nous voyons que la science, en découvrant involontairement la grande complexité de la matière, se présente à nouveau comme philosophie. Se révèle ainsi à nos yeux une quantité considérable de qualités *cachées* que le sens commun considèrerait tout à l'heure « immatérielles », sinon « spirituelles ». Ces qualités sont aussi des qualités humaines. Il n'y a pas de métaphysique, mais une seule nature énigmatique que la politique ne peut plus se permettre d'ignorer. La *politique quantique* recupère alors la totalité de l'Homme et l'amène sur le terrain de la cité en se disposant ainsi à résoudre, au-delà de la séparation entre individu et citoyen, l'extrême aliénation humaine.

Mais, en pratique, que faire pour accélérer ce processus et faire de la vie quelque chose de plus qu'un bien mercantile, assurable et pensionnable?

See page 46

Segue pagina 46

Suite page 46

Starting with this issue, **Vice Versa** will come out with the seasons: four times a year. The magazine is being printed on a better paper to improve the quality of our photographs and illustrations. And we have added 8 pages because the Triangle is getting bigger! **Vice Versa** will now cost a modest \$3.95.

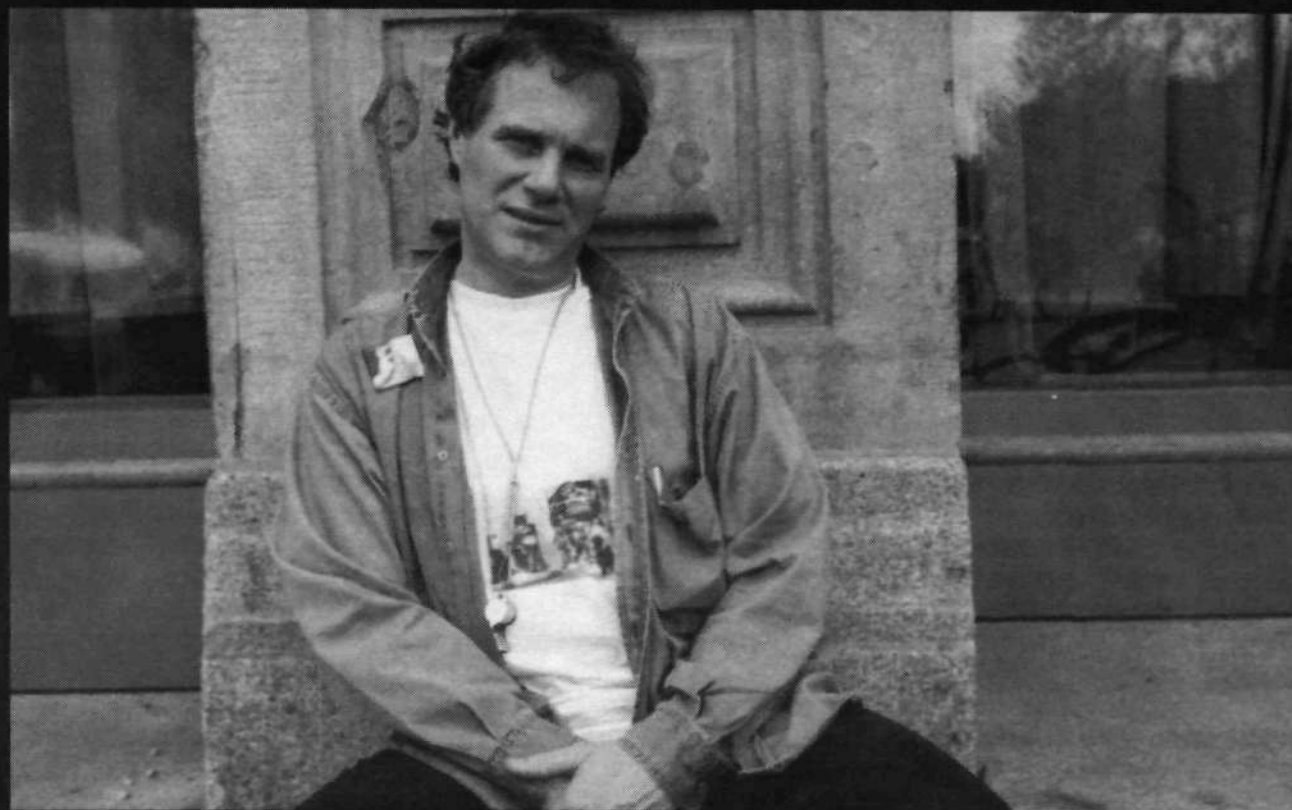
A partire da questo numero **Vice Versa** si mette al ritmo delle stagioni: quattro numeri all'anno. Otto pagine di più e una carta migliore perchè il Triangolo sta crescendo e per offrire una migliore qualità alle illustrazioni e alle fotografie. Il tutto per appena 3 dollari e 95.

Avec ce numéro, le magazine **Vice Versa** se met au rythme des saisons: quatre numéros par année. Huit pages additionnelles et un nouveau papier permettront plus d'espace et une meilleure qualité des photos et des illustrations. Le tout pour un modeste 3,95 \$.

Le Festival du Nouveau Cinéma is in New York!

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Photo by Jacques Dufresne



C L A U D E C H A M B E R L A N

THE RINGMASTER OF OUR CINEMA

*Vice Versa interviews the director
of the Festival du Nouveau Cinéma*

Vice Versa: Claude, what brings you and the Festival du Nouveau Cinéma to New York City?

Claude Chamberlan: This is just a beginning. In the past, I've organized many events between Montreal and New York. I know lots of "cultural workers" there. Finally, three years ago Jerry Sherlock, the director of the New York Film Academy came to our festival and he literally "flipped". Jerry said he'd love to have such a festival in New York because it corresponded to the craziness of New York. Of course, I was very interested. Things finally worked out this year.

V.V.: Is it this sort of "craziness" that links our cities?

C.C.: There are film and painting retrospectives; one-shot deals. You have a Canadian cinema festival, then you don't hear anything about it for ten years. What I'm interested in is creating a permanent link, and not only for the festival! I also mean all the special events... this is only a beginning.

I want to bring some people there from Montreal. I want to mix the crowds of Montreal and New York... in terms of programming, of different projects — that can be done, because the New York site, the building is wonderful. It's cinema, video, new technology. But it's also culture at large. Of course, the name of the game is sponsorship — financial backing. That's what I am working on.

Now, as far as marketing Canadian cinema... it is also a chance to give more exposure to Quebec and Canadian independent productions. Of course, quality and originality is the name of the game. I've announced that a portion of our program would be Canadian, but it's basically an international film program. I am also trying to create all kinds of possible exchanges and special projects.

V.V.: How is Montreal perceived in New York, other than by cinema specialists?

C.C.: Let's say their attitude is relaxed. They see us as seducers perhaps on account of our wonderful hospitality!

V.V.: Do you describe yourself as a Montrealer?

C.C.: I feel close to the native Indians. My heart is in many breeds... and for filmmakers who have something in their guts to express.

V.V.: What do you feel about Toronto?

C.C.: You know, I am more interested in relationships between people...

V.V.: To you, is there such a thing as Canadian film?

C.C.: It's the soul of film that counts...

V.V.: So you want to bring together cultural creativity here with cultural creativity there?

C.C.: It's to extend a "love affair"... discovering a pleasure in working together.

V.V.: Are you looking for a reaction vis-à-vis cultural nationalism?

C.C.: Let me tell you that last year, I met Louise Beaudouin (the Quebec Minister of Cultural Affairs). She has always been very supportive of the festival. Mrs. Beaudouin told me I should be going to Paris with the Festival to expand the "francophonie"



Where is Timothy Leary?

Triangle tale

There was a 25 year old Film Festival full of scars and glory who met a 13 year old Transcultural Magazine on the road to New York. Both were born and raised in Montréal and happy with their lives. But one day, last year, the Magazine decided to leave for Toronto and go down to the Big Apple in search of a Triangle... This year, the Film Festival moved its screens to Manhattan and found the Magazine running down the streets. They met and lived happily ever after.

Photo by Jacques Dufresne

friendship. Her comment took me by surprise but I told her that someone else could take care of that and that we should be working everywhere on earth! In other words: "Arrêtez d'avoir peur!" ("Stop being afraid!") Paris is not so exciting anymore and New York is just an hour away.

V.V.: What about the film program?

C.C.: It's a selection, within the selection of the Montreal film festival. But nothing prevents me from taking Quebec films or Canadian films from a year or two back. Right now we are working on the program: films, video. Peter Wintonick. (director of *Manufacturing Consent*, a documentary on Noam Chomsky) will be collaborating with his Virtual Film Festival.

V.V.: How has New York reacted?

C.C.: The New York Film Academy has been very supportive. Their building in Union Square is one of the most fantastic in New York. It's elegant and very funky! Seven hundred students undergo a very intensive three months' course to produce their films. We can develop all kinds of different things in conjunction with them. I want to open the door to people from here. Finally, aside from the presentation in the film theatre, I will be screening films on the rooftop, among the skyscrapers. It's fantastic. There will also be a photo exhibition of Jacques Dufresne's works, the festival photographer.

...A Japanese company showed interest in us for the first year. They want to see what we are doing. For the second year, we're counting on increased popularity.

Several Canadian companies have contributed a few thousand dollars each to support the initiative. I want to establish joint ventures between filmmakers, producers, distributors; it would be a way to cut expenses. During the Festival I'll try to link up every important filmmaker that I bring here with a local personality. When Al Pacino came I had him meet Robert Lepage (note: celebrated actor, theatre and film director, author of *Elseneur*, a one-man takeoff on Hamlet, and of *Le Confessionnel*, his latest film, among other works.) because he is interested in theatre. I did the same with Robert Frank. There is so little money in Quebec that you have to develop other means that will favour collaboration.

V.V.: How many films will be showing?

C.C.: 15 to 20 programs at most.

V.V.: On a personal level, what is your background, what brought you to film?

C.C.: I used to be a rock 'n' roll singer. A lot of musicians were practising their music in my loft — L-shaped, low rent. In the old days, I was on the political left in East End Montreal. I was committed in a very militant, esthetic and experimental way. I lived all this Marxist — Leninist experience. Café Prag, l'Oeuf, La Paloma. I

lived it all. After, I became a full-time projectionist and my passion for films took off.

V.V.: We want to know something about the Montreal "event"...

C.C.: The festival is more than New York, more than Montreal. If everybody can get along well, it's a rejuvenation.

V.V.: Will you be projecting in Montreal in different areas, outdoors?

C.C.: We will be in Cinéma du Parc and at the Cassavetes Outdoor Screen on Prince Arthur and Avenue du Parc. We will be screening Italian films at the Jean Talon market.

Through the years I've developed connections with people from all walks of life, nationalities, creeds. What (former premier) Parizeau said, killed all these links. (note: on October 30, 1995 he said that the Parti Québécois lost the referendum on Quebec independence because of "money and the ethnic vote".) For 20 years, I worked with the St. Lawrence street merchants' fair and they were always very supportive of the Festival but a great division set in after October 30th.

V.V.: Who are some public backers and what are some of the events, connected to the Festival in Montreal?

C.C.: The Laurentian Bank is very committed to the Festival. I am also working with various Italian associations. For the first time this year Place du Parc is in too. Last year, one of the participants, a Rumanian "countess", said of our fiesta: "Nous nous sommes littéralement ruinés, mais les enfants se sont amusés follement." (We literally went broke, but the kids enjoyed themselves immensely.) ■

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THURSDAY, JUNE 20: OPENING NIGHT

Film & Video to be announced

FRIDAY, JUNE 21

■ **5:00** AU CLAIR DE LA LUNE, André Forcier
Canada/Québec, 1982, 35 mm, color, 90 min., in French
with English subtitles ■ **7:00** MAIDENHEAD, Marie
Craven, Australia, 1995, 35 mm, color, 15 min., in
English ■ **GOOD MEN, GOOD WOMEN**, Hou
Hsiao-hsien, Taiwan/China, 1995, 35 mm, color, 108
min., in Chinese, with English subtitles ■ **9:30** LETTER
TO MY DAUGHTER, Léa Pool, Canada/Québec,
1996, video, color, 13 min., in English ■ **BONES OF
THE FOREST**, Velcrow Ripper/Heather Frise, Canada,
1996, 16 mm, color, 80 min., in English

SATURDAY, JUNE 22

■ **3:30** STRAY DOGS (CHIENS ERRANTS), Yasmine
Kassari, Belgium/Maroc, 1995, 35 mm, color, 7 min.,
English subtitles ■ **CORRIDOR (KORIDORIUS)**,
Sarunas Bartas, Lithuania, 1995, 35 mm, b & w, 80
min., no dialogue ■ **5:30** MIKROS IMAGE PROGRAM
France, 1995-96, video, color, 90 min., in French &
English ■ **7:30** ELDORADO, Charles Binamé,
Canada/Québec, 1995, 35 mm, color, 104 min., in
French, with English subtitles, ■ **9:30** CAUGHT IN
THE ACT (DÉLITS FLAGRANTS), Raymond
Depardon, France, 1995, 35 mm, color, 110 min.,
in French, with English subtitles

SUNDAY JUNE 23

■ **1:30** 4 TELEVISION PLAYS - NACHT UND
TRAÛME, ONLY CLOUDS...QUAD I & II, WHAT
WHERE? Samuel Beckett, Germany, 1977-85, video,
color/b & w, 60 min., in French/no dialogue ■
L'HOMME ATLANTIQUE, Marguerite Duras, France,
1981, 35 mm, color, 42 min., in French/no dialogue ■
3:30 MÉCANOMAGIE, Bady Minck, Luxembourg,
1996, 35 mm, color, 15 min., no dialogue ■ **À PROPOS
DE NICE, LA SUITE**, A. Kiarostami/P. Kimiavi/C.
Breillat/R. Depardon/P. Loungine/C. Denis/Costa-
Gavras/R. Ruiz, France, 1995, 35 mm, color, 105 min.,
in French ■ **6:00** VENTIMIGLIA, Fulco Lorenzini/Marc
van Uchelen, Holland, 1995, 35 mm, color, 13 min., no
dialogue ■ **THE DREAM OF GARUDA**, Takahisa Zeze,
Japan, 1994, 35 mm, color, 60 min., in Japanese, with
English subtitles ■ **7:30** A PRAYER FOR NETTIE,
Donigan Cumming, Canada/Québec, 1995, video, color,
34 min., in English ■ **JIM LOVES JACK: THE JAMES
EGAN STORY**, Canada, 1996, 16 mm, color, 53 min.,
in English ■ **9:30** PUSHING DAISY, Esmé Twum,
England, 1996, 16 mm, color, 24 min., in English
■ **NOWHERE FAST**, Cinque Lee, United States, 1996,
35 mm, color, 110 min., in English

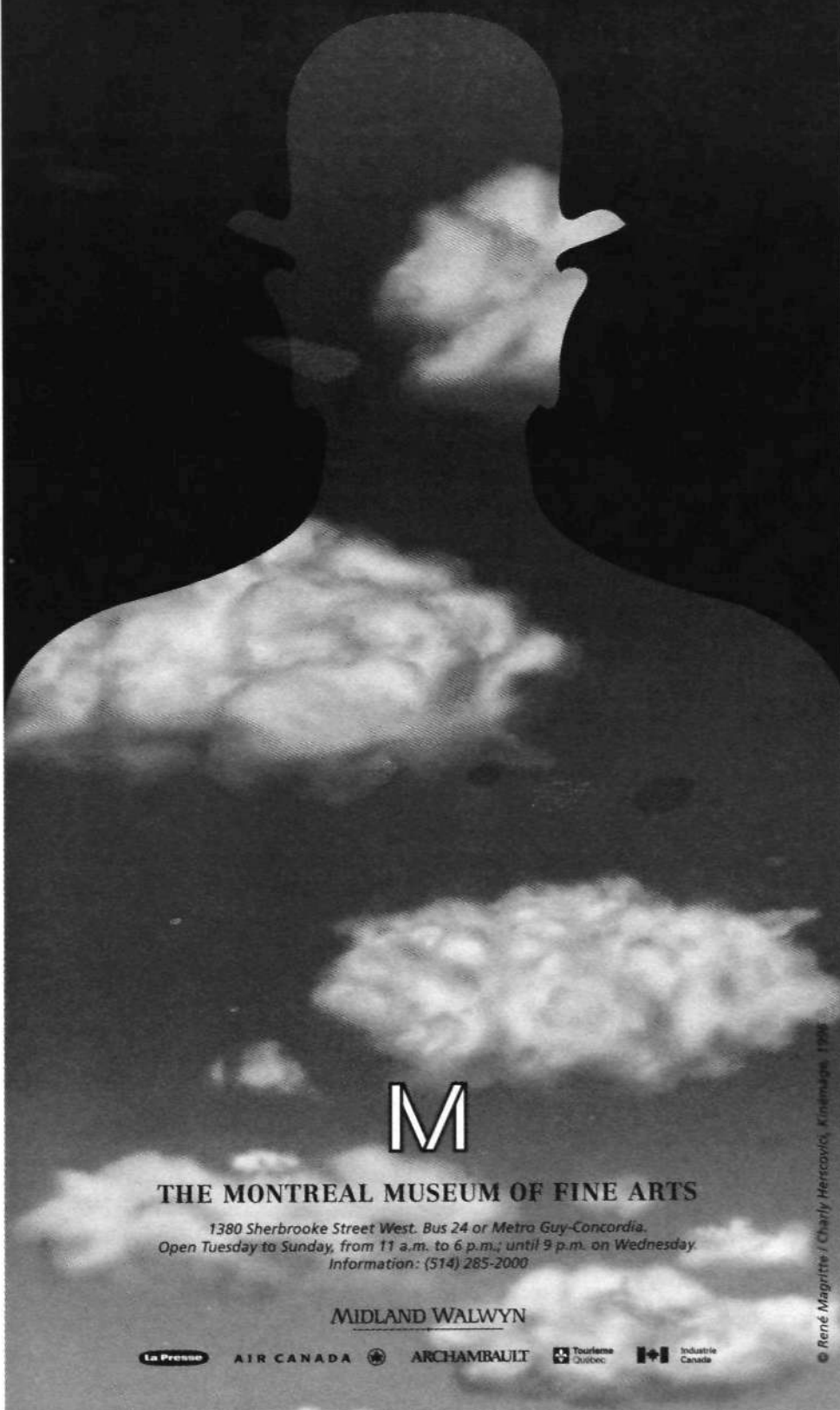
MONDAY, JUNE 24

■ **1:00** THE FREETHINKER, Peter Watkins
Sweden, 1994, video, color, 276 min., in Swedish, with
English subtitles ■ **6:00** BOOYAKA, Denise Iris, United
States, 1995, video, color, 25 min., in English ■ **THE
CHURCH OF ST. COLTRANE**, Jeff Swimmer/Gayle
Gilman, United States, 1996, video, color, 26 min., in
English ■ **DENNIS HOPPER: L.A. BLUES**, Henning
Lohner, France/Germany, 1995, video, 30 min., in
English ■ **8:00** I WAS HAMLET (J'ÉTAIS HAMLET),
Dominik Barbier, France, 1994, video, color, 74 min., in
German and French, with English subtitles ■ **9:30** THE
CONFESSIONAL, Robert Lepage,
Canada/Québec/England/France, 1995, 35 mm, color,
100 min., in French, with English subtitles

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On Jackie Robinson

HE FIELDED, HE HIT AND HE RAN, WITH SO MUCH GRACE

DONALD CUCCIOLETTA



Photo: The Gazette

On the 24th of May of this year (1996) we, in Montreal, will celebrate a 50th anniversary of an episode in baseball, which at the time seemed only important to professional sport, but later, historians would recognize it as a significant and momentous event that had a profound effect towards the struggle of the elimination of discrimination and the beginning of the post World War II struggle for Civil Rights for the African-American. Jackie Robinson, a blackman, broke into professional baseball with the Montreal Royals, the triple A (AAA) farm club of the mythological Brooklyn Dodgers of the National League. Robinson played one year, 1946 and helped Montreal win its only Little World Series. The next year Jackie Robinson moved on to the Major Leagues.

To fully understand the real social and cultural significance of the appearance of Jackie Robinson and not to simply dismiss it as only a baseball story, the environmental context remains primary. After World War II, a war in which hundreds of thousands of black North Americans served and gave up their lives, the integration of the returning soldiers into society became an utmost priority for North American society. The war was to play a direct role in the integration and recognition of the black soldier into civil life. However things did not evolve as some would have hoped. Discrimination, segregation, racism and outright hostility even towards a population (black soldiers) who had risked their lives in the service of their country, continued and the hope for the future seemed dim.

Within this context of hostility towards the black population of America, was decided to introduce a black baseball player, as a possible hope for the beginning of change. Baseball throughout history has been seen and felt as more than just a sport or a game. Baseball in many ways was and still is, a cultural reflection of where America was at. A traditional pastime geared towards the blue collar worker and his family. An urban game, reflective of our urban culture. An activity where the individual and his particular skills is foremost, even though it is played between two teams. The idea

where the individual is foremost, overrides the collective. To make it, one only had to show one's skills. Merit over connections. This was the American way, was it not?

Yet in 1946 there were no black ballplayers. Baseball no longer reflected the American dream but actually reflected the American nightmare. Americans (black, white, red and all the colors in between) had fought and died for the ideals of liberty, justice, fairplay, equality, individual freedom but they had not found any of this upon their return. Was not baseball the pastime where liberty (no time frame), fairplay, equality (each according to his skills), individual freedom (nine separate players freely combining their skills for the collective), the embodiment of America?

It became only natural for baseball, as a symbolic reflection of America, to become the arena where was to be played the first inning of the new post World War II era. Where else could America see and understand the need for change if not through its most symbolic reflection of itself. Baseball was the Shakespearian stage upon which the new Hamlet, in the person of Jackie Robinson, was to voice out loud for all (America and the world) to hear, TO BE OR NOT TO BE.

When Jackie Robinson came to the plate for the first time in Montreal, his crack of the bat was heard around the world. Without any political statements, without any flamboyant speeches, Jackie Robinson did what he did best, play baseball. In doing so, his presence, his courage, his sense of fairplay, showcased the freedom, the freedom of each individual to use his skills among his equals, for the betterment of his fellow man.

In this period of turmoil in North America, where we are witnessing a rise in racial hatred, religious intolerance, spousal abuse, child abuse, homophobia, maybe we should take a little time on the occasion of this fifth anniversary to remember the courage it took for a Jackie Robinson, to say I am an equal and I just want to play baseball. ■

ATANAS GEORGIEV STOÏLOV

Le prix du refuge

Photo: Giovanni Facchin

KARIM MOUTARRIF

Une histoire montréalaise, une histoire canadienne, mais plus pour longtemps. Il y a plusieurs lunes, comme disent les *Sauvages*, que je dors mal. Depuis ce maudit coup de fil m'annonçant que mon ami, Atanas Georgiev Stoïlov, avait reçu son avis de déportation.

Atanas est musicien, il a fait défection à une troupe d'artistes bulgares au cours d'une tournée aux États-Unis.

Depuis quatre ans, il a fait trois fois appel pour un statut de réfugié. Ses appels ont été rejetés trois fois. Atanas ne sait pas bien s'exprimer, il est plutôt timide. Il n'a pas crié suffisamment fort qu'il était menacé.

Habituellement ses instruments d'expression favoris sont sa flûte, sa cornemuse ou son accordéon. En plus, la plupart du temps, ce genre de client n'a pas assez d'argent pour s'offrir une défense décente et c'est souvent un travail bâclé par les avocats.

En quatre ans, il en a vu de toutes les couleurs, vivant d'expédients et de solidarité. Il a fait d'avantage connaître, au Canada, une musique chaleureuse et mélancolique qui nous réchauffait le cœur. Il a exhibé son art dans plusieurs manifestations dites « de rapprochement entre les cultures », à part de t'ça. Quoi de plus civilisé, comme rencontre ?

Au bout de quatre ans, Atanas commence à constituer son réseau et à avoir des contrats. Mais l'angoisse le talonne. Et pour cause ! Cette fois-ci le couperet est tombé, il a jusqu'au 14 juin pour disparaître du territoire canadien. Quatre ans de son existence perdus. Entre-temps, des artistes canadiens ont reconnu qu'il apportait, avec lui, un patrimoine musical tout à fait passionnant, à notre pays. Socialement, il était un voisin discret. En amour, il a rencontré une blonde avec qui il vivait depuis une couple d'années.

Mais tout cela est très loin des préoccupations des bureaucrates de Big Brother.... Heureusement qu'aucun psychopathologiste ne s'est pas penché sur son cas. On aurait pu apprécier les syndromes et les symptômes que toute cette histoire a provoqué.

S'il revendique le statut de musicien indépendant, il doit être plus fort que les musiciens du cru. En effet, en dehors des *bills* que tout un chacun assume tant bien que mal, Atanas doit se trouver quelques milliers de dollars en sus, pour assurer l'instruction de son dossier. Développe toujours tes ulcères, camarades.

On sait que le coût humain n'a pas de prix. Ça tombe bien !

À mois d'un miracle, Atanas Georgiev Stoïlov sera effacé de l'histoire du Canada. Il partira humilié, dans le silence et l'indifférence. Et même si le miracle se produisait, il restera tous ceux et celles qui ne recevront pas la bénédiction... Ceux dont j'entendrais jamais parler.

Dans ces moments-là, surgissent de grandes questions, en désordre, bien sûr : Comment peut-on procéder ainsi, vis-à-vis de quelqu'un qui, par la force des choses et des procédures, était en train de s'intégrer, au moment où on décide de le déporter ?

Les droits du Propriétaire ne sont-ils pas exorbitants ? De quelle humanité parle-t-on dans les beaux discours, « ...Canada, terre d'accueil... » ? L'humanitaire ne peut pas se contenter de demi-mesure. L'accueil des réfugiés et des faux réfugiés ne se résume pas à des procédures à sens unique, il devrait prendre en considération les chambardements économiques dont nous avons profité pendant plusieurs décennies, en les encourageant.

Des économies entières ont été mises à sac, pendant qu'on se dorait la pilule en prenant du bedon. Quand les économies sont à terre, les gens ont faim, et je comprends qu'ils essayent par tous les moyens, de survivre. Il y a très longtemps que cette terre accueille les opprimés d'ailleurs, je ne comprends pas pourquoi, aujourd'hui, il faudrait arrêter.

Je ne comprends pas l'amnésie.

La route vers le Village Global semble ben ben chaotique... ■

* Nom et prénoms fictifs.

SUSPENSION OF BELIEF

With this issue, Toronto — the most ethnically diverse polis on the planet — in partnership with Montréal and New York, emerges as a persuasive accomplice in a vital transcultural exchange. The premise has not changed: to provide an alternative medium where cultural and linguistic plurality can enter centre stage and flourish.

Throughout the 90's, intolerant nationalist discourse has been gaining a feverish following everywhere, even in the most affluent and enlightened countries in history. Witness the Lega Nord in Italy or elements in the Parti Québécois in Canada, while some members of the U.S. Congress are preparing to make English the official language of the United States, fearing a revival of the Spanish language. That this should be taking place among us is a paradox. Nightly on our T.V. screens we witness the unspeakably horrific consequences of a politics based on ideas of national continuity and ethnic purity.

It is little wonder, then, that to pursue pluralism and inclusiveness **Vice Versa** has opted to echo the critical posture of "suspension of disbelief". In founding this Montréal-Toronto-New York geographical triangle **Vice Versa** posits its own suspension of belief in national borders, as the magazine seeks to erase cultural margins, to harmonize our sensibilities, to transcend differences without dissolving them, without annihilating their innate essence, open to their inevitable contribution.

The more **Vice Versa** has delved into the subject of culture and identity — as it has done with rigor for the past 13 years in Québec — the more hybrid individual and collective identity have appeared to be. **Vice Versa**, therefore, cannot be mistaken for an insignificant gesture of End of the Millenium cosmopolitanism. Esperanto is not an ingredient among its ideals. **Vice Versa** speaks several national languages, conscious of the fact that every civilization has been hybrid. Even the English language, with its hybrid vocabulary and irregularities of spelling, is the creation of different populations and cultures, need we remind ourselves.

Nationalism, both of the micro and macro varieties, implies a rigid view of culture. But culture is ever in flux, as mobile as the human species is migratory. Culture and identity are constructed and reconstructed continually. For the Toronto editorial board too, therefore, and we hope for its new readers, **Vice Versa** remains a fundamental medium to let us understand the just sentiment of one's identity, open to the sentiment of one's belonging in the world.

Con questo numero Toronto, la metropoli più etnicamente composta della terra, riafferma la sua complicità con Montréal e New York in un vitale scambio transculturale. L'obiettivo di **Vice Versa** è immutato: imporsi come la pubblicazione alternativa capace di affermare e portare a pieno sviluppo il principio della pluralità linguistica e culturale.

Negli anni '90 si affacciata sulla scena politica internazionale una corrente di nazionalismo intollerante accolta favorevolmente anche nelle società più ricche e avanzate dell'Occidente. La Lega Nord in Italia e alcune componenti del Parti québécois in Canada ne sono un esempio eloquente. Senza contare gli Stati Uniti, dove una parte del Congresso americano, timorosa dell'avanzata della lingua spagnola, si sta battendo per fare dell'inglese la sola lingua ufficiale. E' davvero incredibile che tutto questo stia accadendo intorno a noi. Ogni sera la televisione ci racconta le tragedie di paesi sconvolti dal nazionalismo più feroce e dalla dottrina della purezza etnica.

Non sorprende dunque che **Vice Versa**, avanzando sulla via del pluralismo e dell'apertura, abbia deciso di far eco alla posizione critica della "sospensione della sfiducia". Dando vita al Triangolo Montréal-Toronto-New York, **Vice Versa** afferma la propria sospensione di fiducia nei confronti delle frontiere nazionali, proponendosi di eliminare le divisioni culturali, di armonizzare le diverse sensibilità, di trascendere le differenze senza annullarle, senza distruggerne l'essenza, nella convinzione che la società giusta non possa risultare che dalla loro unione.

Quanto più **Vice Versa** ha approfondito i temi della cultura e dell'identità — come ha fatto con rigore in questi ultimi 13 anni in Québec — tanto più si sono manifestate forme di impurezza e ibridazione individuali e collettive. Non si può dunque confondere **Vice Versa** con un facile gesto cosmopolita da fine millennio. L'esperanto non fa parte del suo bagaglio ideale. **Vice Versa** parla varie lingue nazionali, consapevole del fatto che tutte le civiltà sono state meticce. La lingua inglese non fa eccezione e non va dimenticato che il suo ibrido vocabolario e le sue irregolarità fonetiche testimoniano dell'apporto di diversi popoli e culture. I nazionalismi di ogni rima comportano una visione della cultura rigida, ma ogni cultura è flusso e la migrazione è il proprio del genere umano. Cultura e identità si compongono e ricompongono senza sosta. Per la redazione di Toronto, come speriamo lo sarà anche per i suoi nuovi lettori, la rivista rimane un medium fondamentale per cogliere il senso della propria identità, un'identità aperta al sentimento d'appartenenza al mondo.

Avec ce numéro, Toronto — la plus cosmopolite des villes de la planète — s'associe à Montréal et New York pour une complicité convaincante dans un échange transculturel vital. Le principe n'a pas changé: proposer un médium alternatif où la pluralité linguistique et culturelle puisse être au centre de la scène et s'y épanouir.

Les années 1990 nous ont amené un discours nationaliste intolérant trouvant une audience fervente partout, même dans les pays les plus développés et les plus éclairés. En témoignent, la Ligue Nord en Italie ou même la ligne dure du Parti québécois au Canada, pendant que des membres du Congrès des États-Unis se préparent à rendre l'anglais langue officielle unique, par crainte de l'envahissement de la langue espagnole. Le paradoxe prend ainsi place parmi nous. Tous les soirs, face à nos écrans de télévision, nous assistons aux indescriptibles et horribles conséquences des politiques fondées sur le nationalisme et la pureté ethnique. Il n'y a pas de doute, en défendant le pluralisme et la participation, **Vice Versa** a décidé de faire écho à la position critique de la « suspension of disbelief ». Avec la création du triangle géographique Montréal-Toronto-New York, **Vice Versa** exprime son doute sur les frontières nationales, en cherchant à éliminer les barrières culturelles, en harmonisant nos sensibilités. Il s'agit de transcender les différences sans les désagréger ni annihiler leur essence propre et aller chercher leur contribution incontournable. En développant le sujet de la culture et de l'identité — cela a été fait avec rigueur depuis 13 ans — **Vice Versa** a mis au jour une identité individuelle et collective de plus en plus hybride. Ainsi, **Vice Versa** ne peut-être considéré comme une manifestation facile des débats cosmopolites liés à la fin du millénaire. L'esperanto ne fait pas partie des idéaux du magazine. **Vice Versa** s'exprime dans plusieurs langues nationales, tout en étant conscient que toute civilisation est hybride. Souvenons-nous: même la langue anglaise avec son vocabulaire et ses irrégularités de prononciation, est le fruit de plusieurs peuples et cultures. Le nationalisme, individuel ou étatique, induit une vision arrêtée de la culture.

Or la culture est aussi fluctuante, aussi mouvante que l'espèce humaine qui migre. La culture et l'identité sont en perpétuelle reconstruction. Pour le comité de rédaction de Toronto donc, ainsi que pour ses nouveaux lecteurs nous l'espérons, **Vice Versa** demeure un médium fondamental pour saisir le sentiment de notre identité, une identité ouverte sur notre sens d'appartenance au monde.

Three Cities in a Tale

special
fiction

Writing in the Triangle

An issue dedicated to fiction in the *Triangle* begs the question, Why? **Vice Versa** throughout its 13 years has not only based its content on the exclusive representation of our socio-political and socio-cultural environment. **Vice Versa** has above all been a defender of the word in all its journalistic, novelistic and poetic forms. This exercise into the realm of fiction, however, opened the door to robust discussions on the numerous entries received but above all stimulated reflections on the state of fiction writing in our times. Being on the threshold of the third millenium, does the novel still occupy a socio-political space, will it still serve a purpose besides fattening financial portfolios? In or techno-guided cultural space, will the novel continue to exist and if so, in what form? As you can see dear readers, this issue has provoked in us, an inquiry into the existential meaning of the word. What about you? Do we share the same interrogations or not? Write and let us know. **Vice Versa** welcomes and promotes the dialogue. Till then, good reading and enjoy #52!

e-mail: vice@generation.net

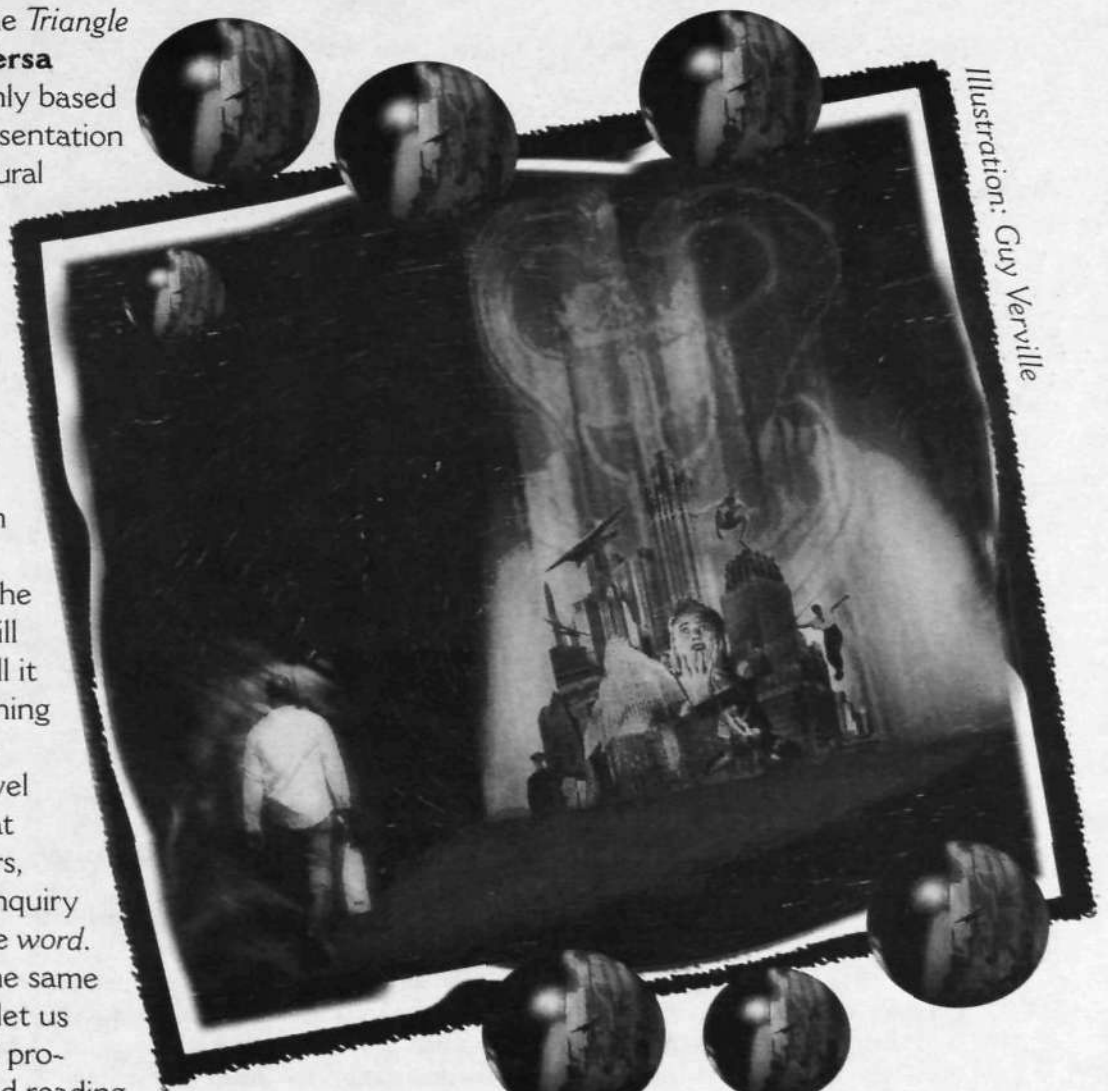


Illustration: Guy Verville

PARTY

RUSSELL SMITH

Russell Smith's first novel, *How Insensitive*, was short-listed for several awards, including the Governor General's, in 1994. A *Western* reviewer with the uninvented name of Candace Fertile wrote: "It's too cool for words; unfortunately there are 258 pages of them." He has published articles in *Details*, *The Globe & Mail*, *Toronto Life* and others.

He lives in downtown Toronto, where he knows a great many people with unproduced feature film scripts. He is working on a new novel, called *Noise*.

Photo: Josef Geranio / Electronic treatment: Guy Verville

Sharon is back from Montreal. Dominic thinks about this as he shaves. He calls to Christine, "Will Sharon be there?"

Christine shouts from the back of her closet. He thinks she said yes. He wonders if now is the time to lose the sideburns completely. The razor hovers over his face. His heart is pounding.

Christine comes in in her bra and black pantyhose. The waistband of the pantyhose cuts into her belly. She looks a little silly. She says, "Does my black tunic look silly with the chunky heels?"

"The Fluevogs or the Destroy boots?"

"I can't decide. Or just the patent black Kelianes. They're a little high. We'll be standing."

Dominic shrugs. He glances at her breasts in the mirror. "Push up bra. PVC skirt and thigh highs, not pantyhose. My favourite. You'll look great. Any shoes."

Christine puffs out her cheeks and shakes her head. She sits on the edge of the bathtub.

He says, "So they really broke up. I mean she's really broken up."

"Oh yeah. I think it's real."

"Is she here to see Pavel, you think?"

Christine turns her palms upwards. "I don't know. I think she's here to see anyone. She's here to get laid. She already knocked off Eddie Trubashnik, last week."

Dominic cuts himself. "Jesus."

"Poor little Eddie." She stands. "I can't decide."

It is incredibly hot and smoky and Dominic's throat is already sore from yelling. The kitchen light is too bright and he is jammed against a countertop by two designers in steely grey who are waving cigarettes too close to his face, and he is yelling at Gabrielle McKendrick and her tall artist friend Sybill who appears to have tattoos all over her: a reptilian tail flicks up her cleavage, a whorl snakes around the nape of her neck.

"So this was like the third proposal I'd written," yells Dominic, "and still no money, and I'm starting to think —"

"Bastards," yells Gabrielle.

"Exactly, bastards, and I'm starting to think, Jesus, I hope this show gets picked up, because if not I've just pissed away the last three weeks, and —"

"You know Global has the same show in development?" yells Sybill, "I mean similar, you know, the same."

"Bastards," yells Dominic. "Bastards, bastards."

"This is Toronto," yells Gabrielle. "This is Toronto."

He lifts his eyes from the hypnotic shiny curves in Gabrielle's spandex top and sees Julian and Gregory, the host, necking in the doorway next to the stove and a bottle about to topple off. He can't see Sharon any more. "Excuse me."

He pushes through to the living room and she is not there either. He squeezes down the hallway, kissing Karen Trevelyan, who has just arrived and says she wants to

talk to him about something when he has a second, and he says okay and steps into a room with a bed piled high with coats. There are four people he has never met standing against the orange walls and laughing and smoking, and Sharon and Christine are sitting, half lying, on the pile of coats. Their heads are close and they are giggling and holding tall narrow glasses. There is a bottle of sparkling wine at Sharon's feet. Both their skirts have ridden up to show their long legs in black tights, shiny and tangled. One strap has fallen off Christine's shoulder.

The people along the wall, three men and a woman, are glancing at them, at the bands of naked thigh, the glossy black haircuts. One of the men is staring at Sharon's cleavage and Sharon knows it but is not looking at him.

GOING

FICTION

The people in the room turn away from them, trying not to look. Dominic hold out his glass and Christine fills it with foam, spilling sticky wine on all their knees. They are all laughing too hard.

"Well," says Dominic, "we're making quite a scene."

"Oh, I know," says Sharon. "Who cares. Who gives a fuck."

Sharon's neck and chest are glowing white. He can smell her perfume. He puts his hand on the metallic nylon of Christine's knee. He wants to see what she is thinking, but can't look at her too obviously. Suddenly he has nothing to say. He sips the fizzy wine and starts to hum.

No one says anything.

"Well," says Christine, "we should get going."

When they have their coats on in the crowded hallway, Sharon is still trying to convince them to stay. "Oh come on," she says, holding Dominic's lapels with her two hands. "It's early."

"I have this thing tomorrow I have to —"

"Sharon," says Christine, laying a hand on her bare shoulder, "whatever you're looking for tonight, you're not going to find here. You should go home."

Sharon scowls and takes her hands off Dominic's coat. "It'll be fun if you stay with me, and then we can go home —"

"Sharon," says Dominic, "go home."

In the taxi they don't speak.

Christine says, "What's wrong? Are you pissed off at me?"

"Christ," says Dominic. "What are you talking about?"

"Well what's the matter?"

"Nothing, for Christ's sake."

Dominic watches the empty storefronts pass, the salt-stained asphalt in the streetlamps.

"Look," says Christine, "I couldn't do it. I'm going to be working with her on that Netboy proposal for Bravo, and it would be just too weird. We have to work together, right?"

"Listen," says Dominic, "I didn't say anything."

DON'T MOVE!

JEAN PIERRE GIRARD

*Est écrivain. Il saute
« all-aigrement » de Joliette
à New York.*

Je prends son corps dans mes bras ; j'y vais avec des raffinements, des précautions, des douceurs dont je ne me savais pas capable. Il n'y a plus rien à faire pour elle, mais je crois qu'un seul autre choc, même minuscule, un seul coup suffirait à la disloquer complètement ; ses bras et ses jambes inanimés se détacheraient de son tronc, et peut-être rejoindraient-ils son âme qui sûrement flotte en ce moment même au-dessus de Manhattan, légère, libérée enfin. Je ne comprends pas ce qui s'est passé, mon inqualifiable attitude des dernières minutes, mes pas vers ce vide absolu où je me trouve désormais, cet espèce de rien, néant douloureux, et les regards, et ce corps dans mes bras inutiles, je n'y comprends rien. Je voudrais que la chaleur de mes mains suffise à ranimer cette petite, c'est tout ce que je voudrais maintenant, je voudrais qu'elle ouvre les yeux pour que je puisse contempler ses noisettes une seule autre fois, essayer de la convaincre qu'une autre réalité est possible pour elle et moi, faire quelque chose.

Mais rien. Elle ne bouge plus. Et moi je la porte.

Sa peau est douce, ouatée, comme je l'ai imaginée quelques minutes plus tôt, les doigts sont effilés, les ongles propres. Je fais très attention afin que le couteau serré dans sa main ne l'effleure pas, ne lui inflige pas de nouvelles blessures.

Je marche vers les gyrophares, au loin, la rue.

Je me demande pourquoi les deux autres femmes m'ont choisi. Si j'ai l'air d'un touriste, ou si quelque chose en moi,

tout à l'heure, laissait présager que mon âme ligotée ne répondrait pas, qu'elle ne se rebellerait pas, et que je ne crierais même pas devant ce qu'elles allaient faire.

En approchant des lumières de la rue, je remarque le teint bistré de la fillette : métisse, Inde et Europe entremêlées, ou quelque chose dans le genre. Des joues découpées au couteau, et du lustre plein les fossettes, qui capte les éclats de lumières et me les renvoient. J'ai connu une Marocaine, pendant un séminaire de maîtrise à Montréal, ou peut-être Toronto, il y a un bon bout de temps, une fille aux yeux semblablement bridés, et dont la peau cuivrée semblait tout aussi douce. Elle commençait toutes ses phrases par « Ah oui ? », je me souviens, c'était charmant. Je n'avais pas osé lui adresser la parole, à l'époque, paralysé déjà que j'étais quand venait le temps d'agir.

La petite a les cheveux noirs et mats, avec une mèche vert forêt un peu plus brillante, une seule boucle d'oreille, énorme et dorée, un collier de perles roses qui fait bien six ou sept fois le tour de son cou, et un ruban au poignet. Elle est belle, gracile, délicate, enveloppée dans un sari pourpre. Elle porte des sandales, et le sang, ce sang partout sur elle, le sang ne lui va pas.

Que puis-je dire ? Je n'ai aucune explication à fournir, il n'y a rien qui tienne, et je ne pourrais rien défendre ou alléguer ; je serais incapable d'accuser qui que ce soit, et je me dégoûte.

Il y a une demi-heure, même pas, je marchais sur la 42^e. Une femme m'interpella, racolleuse, elle sentait l'humus et sa

poitrine avait de toute évidence beaucoup voyagé : « Need something... ? », souffla-t-elle en fixant le haut de la rue. Le désir a monté très vite et j'ai acquiescé, sans demander combien, sans réfléchir. Je l'ai suivie dans une ruelle. Après une cinquantaine de mètres, elle s'est retournée pour me faire face. Dans la pénombre, je l'ai immédiatement trouvée moins attirante, et j'ai entendu une autre voix de femme, derrière moi cette fois, tranchante : « Don't move. Gonna be easy, man... » Je n'ai pas bougé, crétin profond, se laisser piéger ainsi, et j'ai commencé à avoir peur. La racolleuse a sorti un couteau, ça m'a drôlement effrayé, elle s'est approché de moi et elle a scandé entre ses dents : « Don't move, now... See ? », en me regardant droit dans les yeux avec une haine si dense, si parfaite, dont j'étais à ce point absent, que du coup j'ai compris que je n'étais rien pour elle, même pas un grain de riz, et j'ai cessé totalement d'avoir peur ; cette femme n'en voulait ni à ma vie, ni à mon portefeuille, ni à quoi que ce soit d'autre, sauf peut-être à ce qu'elle avait deviné à mon sujet, je ne sais comment, et qui pouvait accommoder ses desseins.

La femme à la voix tranchante est sortie de l'ombre, s'est approchée, s'est avancée dans la lumière diffuse de la ruelle en traînant une adolescente assez frêle derrière elle, bâillonnée, poignets ligotés, consentante, molle, et qui n'essayait plus de fuir, ai-je pensé. À ma hauteur, la femme s'est arrêtée et mon regard a croisé celui de la gamine, ses yeux marron. Elle ne semblait ni désemparée ni résignée ; une



Illustration: Jacques Cournoyer

flamme meurtrie, peut-être un peu lasse, mais tellement lumineuse, dansait sous ses paupières, insolente, sans égard pour le tragique, sans hommage à la gravité de la situation, sans aucune espèce de respect envers l'allure et le sens terrifiants que semblaient vouloir adopter les choses. Ses yeux, cette flamme, c'était presque une bravade. Elle ne comptait pas sur moi. Elle ne comptait plus sur qui que ce soit. Elle me dévisageait parce que je me trouvais à cet instant devant son phare, c'est tout, et elle me disait : à quoi ça sert d'essayer de fuir, monsieur ?

Je me trouvais là, spectateur pétrifié, alors que cette petite était l'Innocence incarnée, j'en suis certain, et même en cette seconde j'en demeure convaincu : l'Innocence.

De sorte que dans cette ruelle, c'est exactement comme si la Pureté m'avait arrêté sur la rue, m'avait adressé directement la parole, et qu'elle m'avait demandé : à quoi ça sert, monsieur ? Elles ont décidé que j'étais coupable de quelque chose, vous comprenez ? Alors à quoi bon ? J'ignore ce qu'elle pouvait avoir fait. Ou refusé de faire. Je me suis dit : Question de territoire, ou de ristournes, ou trop d'audace peut-être. "Ça pouvait être vraiment n'importe quoi, mais ça ne changeait rien à l'Innocence. Rien à mes yeux.

Les deux femmes m'ont observé de longues secondes, et mon immobilité a probablement confirmé quelque chose en elles. Elles se sont regardées ; le sort était jeté.

C'est la racolleuse qui a donné le premier coup. Sur la tête, avec le manche du couteau, et la fillette s'est tout de suite évanouie. Elle a chuté au sol, comme un oreiller de plumes, sans un bruit, un souffle sur une joue. Des monstres hurlaient dans mon ventre et mon sang n'a fait qu'un tour, comme on dit, mais je suis demeuré totalement immobile, loin du trio, à toutes fins utiles assez libre, mais incapable de bouger, de me sauver, d'aller chercher de l'aide. J'étais envahi par une terreur immense, une peur horrible de moi-même, à l'instant même où les coups résonnaient, où leurs efforts pour frapper fort ponctuaient la nuit, et que je n'intervenais pas. À cet instant précis, de la crasse new-yorkaise jusqu'aux strass nuageuses dans le ciel de mon enfance, tout a basculé dans l'injuste, dans le mal lu, dans l'imposture, dans le malentendu, dans la honte. Ma tête s'est mise à bouger, comme si j'enfonçais des clous avec mon front, gestes affolés qui s'appartenaient à eux-mêmes, je crois, bien plus qu'à moi. Et de ma gorge j'ai entendu monter un râle immonde, comme si les monstres fuyaient par ma gorge, les rats, je me dégoûte, comme si râler était une façon de continuer à vivre.

Elles l'ont battue, rouée de coups, la plaquant contre les briques, lui projetant

des objets, une poubelle, des bouteilles, la frappant au sol, l'une la tenant par les aisselles pendant que l'autre cognait. Ma tête bondissait de tous bords tous côtés, maintenant, désordonnée, mais mon corps restait immobile, pétrifié sous mon gémissement affreux.

Finalement, la racolleuse a repris son couteau et s'est installée posément, genoux au sol, derrière la fillette inanimée, en lui tenant une poignée de cheveux de la main gauche. Ma tête a cessé de bouger, mais je râlais toujours. La femme a marqué une pause, m'a regardé fixement dans les yeux, a baissé légèrement la tête vers la fillette, et d'un geste précis et sûr elle lui a tranché la gorge d'une oreille à l'autre. Je n'ai plus émis un seul son et j'ai cessé de respirer, incapable. Elle a laissé retomber le petit corps sur le dos, a attendu quelques secondes pendant que le sang jaillissait en saccades, on aurait dit une musique à la mode, cadence installée, maintenue au diapason, abrutissante ; de ces musiques sur lesquelles

on ferme les yeux pour tourner, fou, sur les pistes. Ensuite elle a appuyé de tout son poids sur la poitrine de l'enfant. Trente secondes, une minute, le sang jaillissait toujours, flot insensé dans la ruelle, et quand le débit a ralenti enfin, la racolleuse a retiré son bras, sa main ; elle a posé son oreille à la hauteur du cœur de l'enfant, puis, se redressant, elle a fait un signe de tête en direction de l'autre femme. Les deux se sont tournées vers moi, elles se trouvaient peut-être à cinq, six mètres, et elles m'ont regardé de nouveau. Elles haletaient, aussi épuisées l'une que l'autre, et c'est à ce moment-là que j'ai recommencé à respirer je crois. Après un moment, la racolleuse a essuyé le manche du couteau et s'est avancée vers moi.

Elle a soulevé mon bras inanimé, a pressé le couteau dans ma main, dans la position exacte où il se trouvait dans la sienne, au moment de trancher la gorge de la petite. Je regardais droit devant, loin, le plus loin possible où pouvait se réfugier



Photo: Gilbert Duclos / Traitement électronique: Guy Verville

mon regard, j'essayais de rejoindre cette enfant qui ne bougeait plus et dont le sang se répandait lentement en un grande flaque sombre, partout dans ma vie, à cinq mètres de mon corps immobile. La raccolleuse me fixait toujours. L'autre femme guettait l'entrée de la ruelle. « Hurry up ! », lança-t-elle.

La raccolleuse a retiré le couteau de ma main, en douceur et presque à regret, m'a-t-il semblé, avec ce que j'ai bien cru être une sorte de tristesse, ou de tendresse, mais c'est peut-être la même chose. Un rien hésitante, elle m'a embrassé à la base du cou, puis elle est allée déposer l'arme entre les doigts de la fillette. Ensuite les deux femmes sont parties, résolues, comme si elles savaient exactement où on devait se rendre après un meurtre, quelle direction il fallait prendre.

« Ça m'a pris cinq, six minutes je suppose avant de réapprivoiser le mouvement.

Quand j'ai été libre de moi-même, libéré de cette terreur atroce qui m'avait dominé — et plus atroce encore, cette terreur, parce que maintenant diffuse, latente et réembusquée en moi, menaçante —, quand j'ai été libre je n'ai pas songé une seule seconde à prendre la fuite. Le regard de cette petite fille se brisait désormais sur le mien, comme une vague se brise cent ans sur un récif avant de le vaincre et l'effacer ; son regard, dans le mien, pour le reste de mon existence. Et sa voix, que je n'avais jamais entendue, sa voix me répétait : à quoi ça sert d'essayer de fuir, monsieur ? Elles ont décidé que j'étais coupable, monsieur.

J'ai entendu les sirènes de la police, probablement alertée par les deux femmes. Au bout de la ruelle, des girophares tournaient, balayaient la nuit de la clarté fuyante des drames.

J'ai soulevé son corps avec d'infinies précautions, je l'ai serré contre moi avec toute la délicatesse dont j'étais capable, je l'ai serrée si tendrement, cette enfant, c'était la dernière fois que je pouvais le faire. J'ai pleuré un peu.

J'ai marché vers les lumières, et je marche encore vers elles, parce que fuir est inutile et que la petite a été assez claire là-dessus. Une voix rauque, bourrée de haine, s'adresse à moi sur un ton qui n'admet aucune réplique : « Don't move ! », lance-t-elle. Je m'arrête. Je laisse retomber ma tête sur le côté, le regard vissé dans la joue parfaite de cette petite eurasiennne morte sans que j'intervienne. « Don't move ! » répète la voix.

Il n'en est plus question. ■

Joliette
Mars 1996

NEW YORK

EDOARDO SANT'ELIA

È nato a Napoli, come tutti noi, nel 1955. Qui ha fondato e dirige "il rosso e il nero" rivista di letteratura italiana contemporanea. È poeta, saggista, autore e regista di teatro. Da napoletano verace, siamo certi che ha anche una bella voce...

Una farfalla si è posata
sul pilone, spalancando
le gotiche ali:
ma l'uomo anziano,
ben vestito, che conta,
una ad una le sue monetine,
vivente scultura,
ha altro a cui pensare.
I mulini della modernità
erano macchine giovani
quando il camiciotto
del ragazzo giallo
si riempì di parole:
poi vennero i dirigibili,
ancorati al pennone,
ed il palazzo fu scalato
dalla bestia impazzita.
Ora, con studiata cortesia,
i mimi offrono ai passanti
che stanno al gioco
un inchino profondo
e una rosa presunta.
Cos'ha da ridere quel grattacielo ?
Forse non gradisce lo spettacolo ?
E se dai bidoni d'alluminio
facendo saltare i coperchi

spuntassero tre ballerini,
occhiali scuri e frak,
grinta tranquilla, gesti misurati,
si fermerebbe, allora, il tassì ?
E se l'idrante spruzzasse petrolio,
il cieco all'angolo
getterebbe bastone e piattino ?
Certo, le cisterne
sono obelischi democratici,
non pretendono doni,
non danno responsi;
nel mezzo dell'incrocio,
tuttavia, i semafori a grappolo,
strumenti di un destino meccanico,
lampeggiano arcaici segnali,
bagliori primitivi, proprio lì,
tra il cemento e l'asfalto,
dove giardinieri improvvisati
inventano frammenti di natura.
Non hanno nomi illustri
queste piante; gli erbari
medioevali fioriscono
solo nei chiostri, all'ombra
saccente del museo.
Ma ormai s'è fatto tardi;
mentre i guardiani della città



Photo: Jerry Foyster

tengono a bada il fuoco,
coi lunghi getti d'acqua,
torna a casa zoppicando
il giustiziere vanesio,
in calzamaglia, reduce
di un altro pianeta; impassibili,
i mulini della modernità
continuano a macinare
il grano dell'eterno presente.

THE RESCUE

Illustrations by Austin Metzger



The Caddy starts without a hitch... and we're off to my new life. I sit in the front with V and the kid sits in the back up against some of the luggage.

LEONARD SCHULMAN

Born and raised in Brooklyn (yay!). Dropped out of Brooklyn College after six fun-filled years. Began work at TIME magazine as a copyboy. Soon promoted to the production staff where he stayed for the next 28 years. Only production person in the history of TIME to publish articles in the magazine: an American Scene in 1987, a profile on Edmund White in 1990. In 1988, he worked for famed TIME correspondent James Wilde as a stringer in Nairobi — he is grateful for that learning experience.

Nothing is so rare as to read about what is true. My mother died and I became an observant Jew. I ran from shul to shul, making minyans, saying Kaddish... My best friend and his 18-year-old son died in a bizarre plane crash. The small plane my friend was piloting was hit by a sky-diver. First time in human history. Actually the second, but the first in which fatalities occurred. My childhood friend, his son (freshman at M.I.T., no less) and two lady friends. This is true, you could look it up. Plane came down over Northampton, Mass., November 21, 1993. I didn't hear about it until a month later (letter from Elliot's cousin). It made the national and even some international news. First time in human history, imagine. It was for Elliot that I returned to the fold — to say Kaddish. First shabbos I said Kaddish for him, I remember the trees in Greenwich Village were iced

like fine glass. Cold, cold day. Couldn't help thinking, though, that the trees were a photographer's delight. Elliot, amongst other professions, was first and foremost a photographer. As a boy he would have been out photographing on such a day... he had a poetic soul... I grieved his loss... going back to shul brought me some comfort.

I began to dream a lot. "And they hated him yet the more because of his dreams." Joseph, that is. Did you know that Christian missionaries have converted half the world with the story of Joseph and his brothers? But do they tell the heathens that they took the story from the Jewish Bible! Forget about it... slips their mind... irrelevant...

I dreamt that my old dog Rollo was alive again! Hurrah! I wanted that dream to go on forever...

I dreamt of a loneliness... a loneliness so strong that I was engulfed in terror. In my dream, I was in an old house, a house I

have never lived in in real life but only in my dream life, a nightmare that has recurred for decades now, going back to early childhood. And I'm trapped in this house, no way out! I'm in the house and alone: that's all... no monsters... and yet it is a terrifying dream for me... even worse than my dreams of great rage.

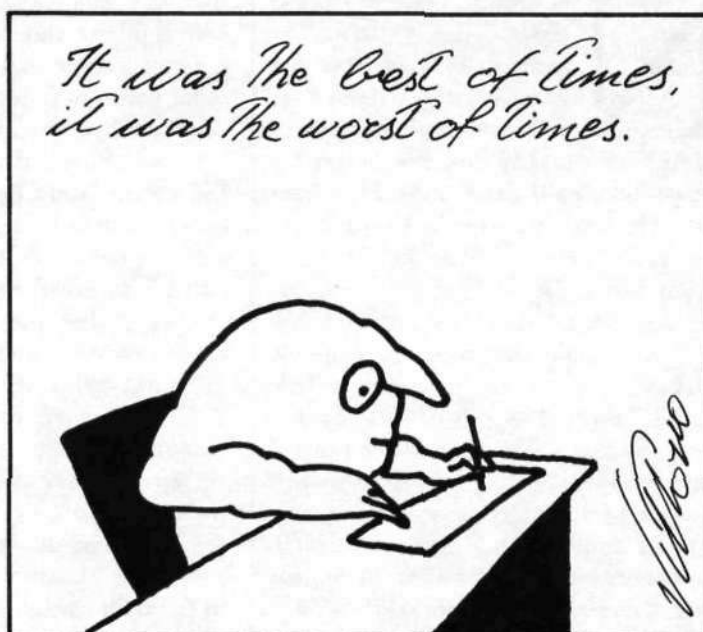
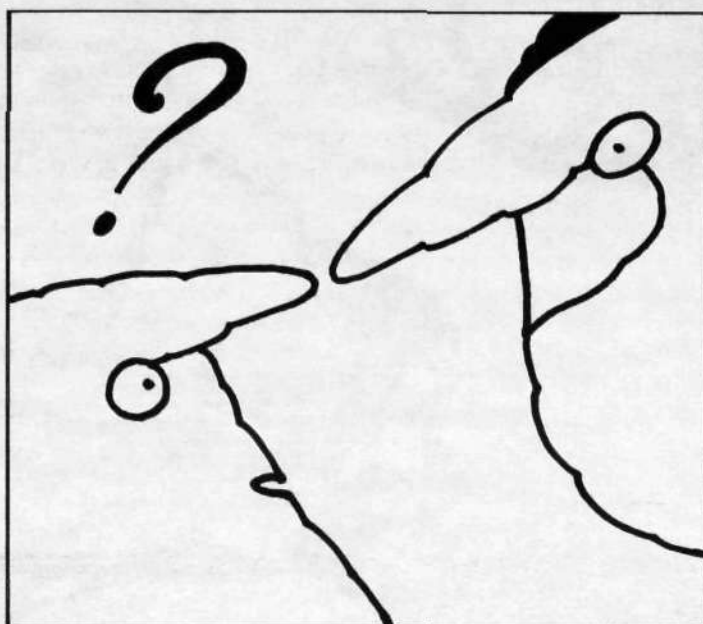
I awake from this dream, but then, groggy, fall back into another. I dream I see my mother (she's together with her sister, my Aunt Rose), and they are walking together and chatting. She is wearing a blue dress (I'm dreaming in color, I remember noting clinically); I call out to her: "What is death like?" but before she can answer, I awake.

I awake. The lonely house is gone, ditto for my mother, Aunt Rose, dog Rollo and all the other dreams I've dreamed. Vanished into the mist of time; gone to where?

While I'm still here: in my small dark cave on Mott street. Tenement apartment...the rent is cheap... the heat pipes are clanging... it's early morning. I can hear Maria singing a sweet Dominican song! As she makes coffee in her apartment directly across from mine. We live on the ground floor, to the back... I'm grateful for the nearness of other humans. I'm no longer totally alone, the horror! I begin to say the morning prayers...

I'm sending out postcards to friends. These missives, these cards, are not mere greetings: they are deeply-felt cries from the heart. Cries (pathetic, perhaps) for help. Help me! Help! help!

VITTORINO



One of my friends that I am sending out cards to is the great artist, V. I pour out my soul to him in these cards (while including a little humor at the same time — V's Achilles heel: love of humor). V, drop everything, break away from your important and busy schedule — and rescue me! V, come save your old friend, a poor old Jew! Save me. I will start a new life in Montreal. Two old friends living close together... it would be nice... no?

I had gotten old, I was past the age of 50, I had no wife, no children, that life had somehow passed me by — (this is all true — no dream) — I had missed the boat! And I had been downsized by a big corporation going mean and lean in the Nineties. I was sacked... out of work and

ringing throughout the old Little Italy building.

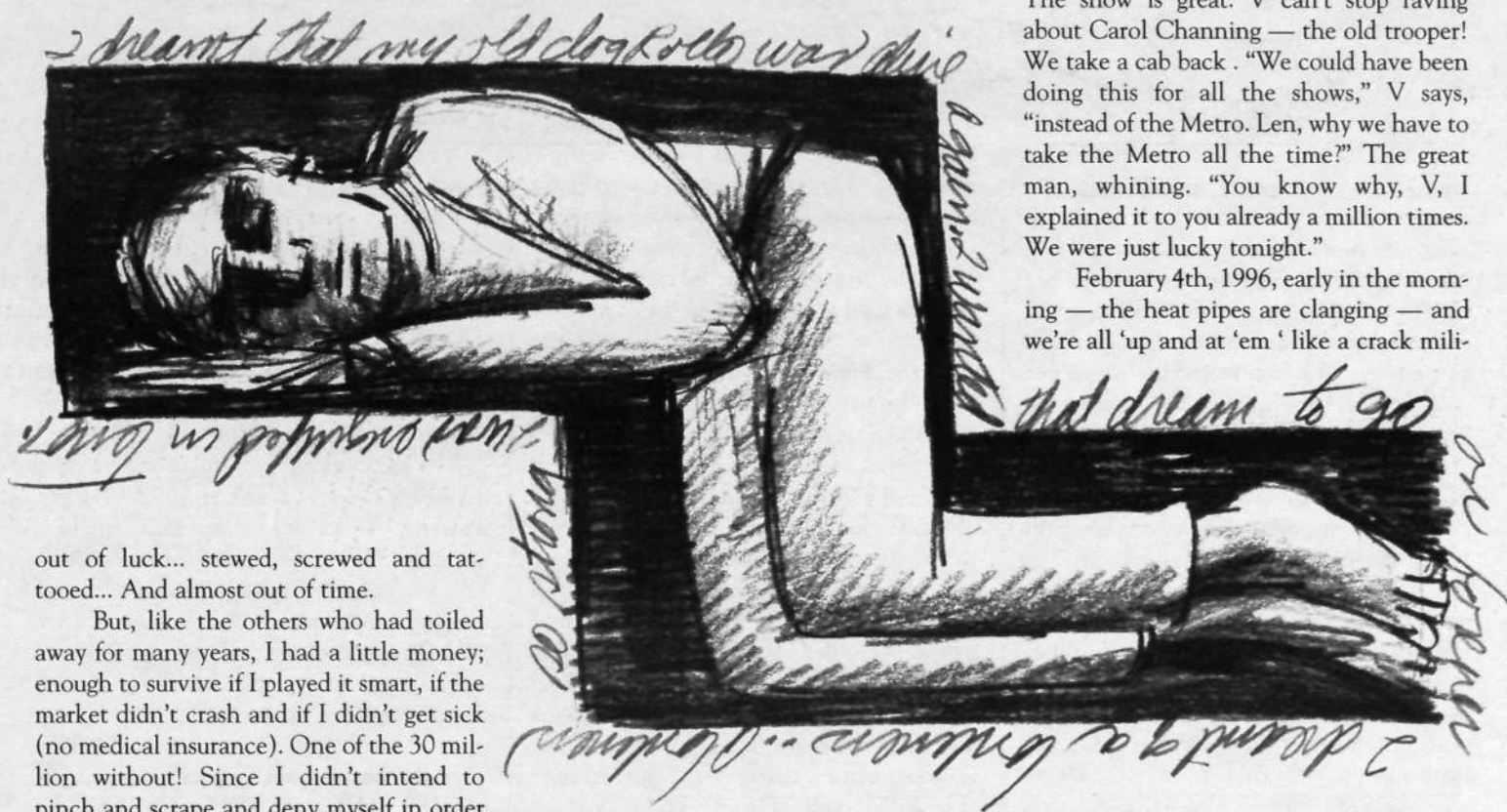
V loves cats. He always has one. And his cat poster — *100 Cats And A Mouse* — is famous worldwide. At my kitchen table V sits drawing his little cartoons, drinking wine, carrying on conversations. Sometimes jumping up to make a point. V always in motion. Being around V is like being around a hurricane. And any woman who lives with him (there've been many) has to be strong, a fighter. The Kid is no exception. If she started out a little weak, V has already "taken her apart and put her back together," the V way.

"Maybe a little too strong," he confides to me. But V likes a good fight; likes a good fighter. *He's a good fighter.* "I've fought

pulling off his shoe and sock, "take a look — could it be gangrene?" "No, V." "You sure?" V wants a second opinion. Calls the Kid away from the kitchen where she's busy preparing spaghetti for dinner tonight. "I, look at my foot. Could it be gangrene?"

On Saturday night the wonderful "teart" (V pronunciation) awaits us. My friend Sal joins us to make a foursome. V knows *Dolly* by heart. Even with his bad foot (he kicked a subway wall the day before to make matters even worse), the Cat (V) is grinning from ear to ear. And in consideration of his bad foot and Sal's bad ticker, we take a cab to the theater — braving clogged arterial routes — by sneaking up the far westside streets and then turning down West 46th. We're lucky, it works! The show is great. V can't stop raving about Carol Channing — the old trooper! We take a cab back. "We could have been doing this for all the shows," V says, "instead of the Metro. Len, why we have to take the Metro all the time?" The great man, whining. "You know why, V, I explained it to you already a million times. We were just lucky tonight."

February 4th, 1996, early in the morning — the heat pipes are clanging — and we're all 'up and at 'em' like a crack mili-



out of luck... stewed, screwed and tattooed... And almost out of time.

But, like the others who had toiled away for many years, I had a little money; enough to survive if I played it smart, if the market didn't crash and if I didn't get sick (no medical insurance). One of the 30 million without! Since I didn't intend to pinch and scrape and deny myself in order to buy coverage — fuck that noise! — I would have to do without! And trust in Hashem. *Baruch Hashem.*

A week before New Year's, the old Italian arrives from his North Pole city.

And in the great V style! Driving a vintage '68 Caddy Eldorado! And a new girlfriend! I is dark and cute and almost 40 years his junior! V is in his early 60s; but I says that her friends say that V has no age — He's timeless!" V calls her "the Kid."

V settles in and soon outlines the agenda. We're going to the theater for the next five nights. It's the holiday season. (It's always a holiday when V is in town!) Once again it's so great to see him, to be in his presence, in the presence of greatness! The great smile! The mouth full of gleaming white teeth! The black curly hair and bushy eyebrows! The barrel chest! The big voice (coming at you in three languages!) The great Roman nose, V's so proud of! But most of all: the big voice! V's voice soon

all my life to be who I am," is a famous V quote.

V's cartoons are philosophical inquiries into the meaning of life. His major creation is a figure he calls "the little man." "The little man," V once told me, "is the symbol for universal mankind. He can go into outer space and another intelligence can look at this figure and understand all that Man was about. Not bad, eh?" V laughs, "and just this little drawing; no body, just a head, hands and feet." V justifiably proud.

V is constantly making lists. Right now he's busy (in his neat block lettering) listing all the shows we're going to see this week. The one he's especially excited about is *Hello, Dolly*. One of his favorite shows plus, Carol Channing is in the cast! We'll see it on Saturday night, the night before New Year's Eve. V's foot is hurting ("I dropped a fish on it") and his ankle begins to swell. "Len," he says to me,

tary team. V, the little general, natch! The leader. And a good one! The Kid and I trying our best. We load the Caddy with all 18 of my bags. "Len, you got 18 bags!" V whines. "V, I'm moving to Canada, that's not a lot." "Okay, okay. Remember the toy monkey! Bring it with you. You'll like it in your new apartment."

The Caddy starts without a hitch (unlike New Year's Eve — but that's a whole other story — the Nadine story — I'll get to that someday) and we're off to my new life. I sit in the front with V and the Kid sits in the back, up against some of the bags that are jammed in tight; every available inch of space is used to maximum effect. On the way up we stop at Woodstock for a short visit with the Metzes. It has been snowing heavily for the past two hours and the snow is already about a half foot deep. As we turn onto the property, V drives the Caddy slightly off the road, and we're stuck! But help arrives



"Think well," V says. "I'm driving at 35 m.p.h. because my theory is that the goal is to get home... so don't think you're driving with an old man, you're driving with a smart man."

almost immediately — Lainie Metze and a couple of neighbors. We all try to push the Caddy back on the path — but no luck! Nothing doing. Not an inch. The old Caddy is built like a tank. We try again; still no dice. Wheels just spinning out on slippery ice. The Cat behind the wheel just getting madder and madder! Finally he knows what has to be done! He gets out and gives the wheel to the Kid. V, who is short — uses the famous low center of gravity! He pushes along with us. Still nothing doing! We rest... Lainie goes off to find some cardboard... V wants to attack again... okay... we push... we bounce it a little... let's go: One more time! Still nothing! V about to blow a gasket! This is it! The moment of truth! Suddenly from V a great push and a mighty scream that splits the heavens!

And of course the car moves! V has done it! The old samurai! The good old posterman! Now we are ready for a good lunch the Metzses invite us in for.

Old friends meeting. The house is spinning with great stories and brilliant wit. The Cat even remembering great lines from Winston Churchill and George Bernard Shaw — "If I were your wife, I would serve you poison in your tea. And if I were your husband, madam, I would drink it" — V delivers for the crowd and then laughs uproariously. Austin gets a phone call; he's on the line for quite a while — business problems — and then it's time to leave. No one can believe that we're heading out into a blizzard, the snow hasn't quit falling the whole time!

But we go. Off to Montreal! On the Northway, driving is extremely hazardous. We've already passed four cars that have driven off the road. "Think well," V says, "I'm driving at 35 m.p.h. because my theory is that the goal is to get home — to get

through — not to be stuck on the road. So don't think you're driving with an old man; you're driving with a smart man."

The Kid is sleeping in the back. It's freezing cold out but inside the Caddy it's very warm. Snow is whirling onto the windshield in a strange funnel-like fashion. The visibility is terrible, but still trailer trucks whiz past us at 70 — sometimes two or three in a row! They almost blow us off the road! But the Cat is in control! Good old Cat! He's driving steady, no fear. Soon we stop at a station for some gas and coffee, and when we get back in V has the Kid drive for a while as he grabs a little shuteye in the back. But soon he's back and takes the final leg... customs is maybe an hour away... the windshield wipers are squeaking and the noise is getting on his nerves a little. He turns on the radio... but the music is so faint... we can barely hear it. V shuts it off and begins to sing under his breath. If my memory serves me well, "It Only Takes A Moment," a tune from Dolly was one the songs.

The next day I'm saying Kaddish for my mother in the Bagg Street Shul. Sunlight is streaming in through stained-glass widows. Old wooden pews with seats that open up to store prayer books and tallis shawls. Skylight over the bimah.

Standing outside a carwash somewhere in Montreal, V is in his little black Beatle boots and bouncing from foot to foot, trying to keep warm. Underdressed for the cold, as usual, he's in uniform: black leather jacket, black jeans, black silk shirt, black scarf; no hat, of course. Kidding with the attendants while waiting for the Caddy. Everybody loves the black car, love all of V's cars. Grinning, he gets back into the Caddy and drives back to his loft on rue Notre Dame. Let's follow the Cat as he drives back: A couple of times we see the

black car stop and the small man spring to the street, camera in hand, and take some shots. He is taking photos of his new poster 100 Years Of Cinema that blankets the street walls. His posters have blanketed Montreal's walls for close to 40 years now! "Not bad," V thinks to himself as he gets back into the car. "Best poster on the street." V happy as a clam.

One week later, V picks me up on a beautiful sunny Sunday and we drive out past the frozen St. Lawrence River. In a garage out here he has many of his cars hidden away and every other Sunday he drives out to start them up. He shows them to me and then goes into a detailed history of each and every one. Car design is his favorite subject in the world. We even go into a couple and sit for awhile. Then V puts the covers back on, pats them down meticulously and off we go back to Montreal. We stop for a hamburger on the way back. "Part of the ritual," V explains.

V drops me off in front of my new apartment on rue Esplanade, across the street from Jeanne-Mance Park and Mount Royal. As the great car idles, V says to me, "Think well, Len. Think of how nice your new life can be here. Far away from your drug addict friends in New York. Look at the park... think how nice it will be in the summer... the trees in bloom, the sweet smells, all the people in harmony with life and nature... the birds chirping, the dogs running free..."

It was time to go. My new life was well under way. But V wasn't finished yet. "And think well, Len, it was the Caddy, the good old Eldy '68 that came to your rescue. Ha! ha! ha!"

No, V, it was you who came to the rescue. My dear old friend. "Scorpio monkey"! ■



Viaggio d'affari

A. PILON

[la lingua]

— ...ma a Toronto che lingua parlano? il francese?...

— Idiota! parlano l'inglese, ma quante volte te lo devo dire? a Montreal parlano il francese...ti ho anche mostrato la carta geografica, Toronto è nell' Ontario, Montreal nel Quebec... e nel Quebec si parla il francese...capito?

— Sarà un problema con quel francese... disse preoccupato Giovanni guardando una delle cartine geografiche sparse sul tavolo.

— Ma perchè tu parli l'inglese? chiese Antonio spazientito dando un calcio al tavolo e facendo cadere tutte le mappe e i disegni.

— No...io no, rispose Giovanni guardando ottusamente Antonio.

— E allora che cazzo ti preoccupi per il francese?... gridò disperatamente Antonio che si avvicinò alla finestra del piccolo appartamento in cui Don Cirillo li aveva sistemati prima del viaggio per affari.

Guardò il grattacielo Pirelli che splendeva nella notte, guardò anche la Madonnina del Duomo e pensò a quanto poteva valere.

— Lo sanno tutti che è falsa

— Come? chiese Giovanni mentre raccoglieva le carte e i disegni sparpagliati sul pavimento.

— Niente! idiota, niente! disse a bassa voce Antonio pensando che questa volta Don Cirillo era andato troppo lontano. Non era il lavoro che lo spaventava, anche

CORRADO PAINA

Corrado, la forza dei nomi!, ha corso il mondo. Prima l'Africa poi l'America del Sud, infine nel 1987, ha investito Toronto. Qui ha continuato a correre, e a scrivere. Non ci crederete ma il suo primo libro, uscito nel 1995, si intitola "Di corsa"...

se quattro contratti in tre città gli parevano un po' troppo, ma mettergli alle costole il nipote Giovanni era veramente come sfidare la sorte.

— Giovanni è un bravo ragazzo, e poi è ubbidiente e preciso, gli aveva detto Don Cirillo.

— Non intendo obbiettare Don Cirillo ma, senza offesa, Giovanni non mi sembra la persona adatta... s'era permesso di replicare Antonio.

— Di' pure che è stupido come una capra, non mi offendo, ma basta un solo cervello mio caro Antonio e tu ne hai da vendere, e poi Giovanni fa parte della famiglia...

— Avete ragione Voi Don Cirillo... aveva detto a malincuore Antonio e adesso ripensando a quel colloquio, guardava Milano risplendere come un aeroporto.

Antonio sentì il peso della pistola nella tasca sinistra.

— Ce la caveremo, non ci saranno problemi, disse Giovanni per rincuorarlo seduto al tavolo dove aveva riposto ordinatamente tutte le mappe geografiche e i disegni.

Antonio toccò il calcio della pistola e ghignò, ma in quel mentre vide sulla facciata del Pirellone il volto di zia Maria in gramaglie e abbandonò il sogno tentatore di avvicinarsi amichevolmente a Giovanni, chiedergli di portargli qualcosa da bere e mentre questi frugava nel frigorifero, avvitarlo il silenziatore alla canna della pistola, appoggiare il nero cilindro sulla tempia dell'idiota e premere il grilletto.

Un gesto che certamente avrebbe fatto incazzare Don Cirillo.

— Potevamo andare a divertirvi in qualche locale, Don Cirillo dice che Milano è piena di modelle americane che ci stanno... gridò Giovanni dalla cucina distogliendo Antonio dalle sue quotidiane meditazioni sul silenziatore.

Antonio si strinse la cintura dei pantaloni mentre Giovanni si avvicinava con due sigarette accese in mano.

— Tieni, gli disse timidamente Giovanni porgendogli una Marlboro accesa... non ti preoccupare... non ci saranno problemi... A quel punto Antonio vide due volti sul Pirellone quello di zia Maria che piangeva per la prematura dipartita del figlio Giovanni e quello di Don Cirillo che gli spiegava che a New York, a Montreal e a Toronto c'erano alcuni concorrenti che gli creavano qualche problemino e che Antonio doveva risolvere tutto senza fare

troppo casino. Insomma una cosetta da gentiluomini.

Antonio guardò Giovanni che gli sorrideva con occhi bovini e gli offriva la sigaretta. La sua mano lasciò malvolentieri la pistola e le sue meditazioni e prese la sigaretta, poi Antonio parlò.

— Va bene ripassiamo tutto da capo...

Giovanni lo guardò imbronciato e fu sul punto di parlare, ma Antonio lo fermò dicendo

— Non ci provare, te lo spiego io, andiamo a New York negli Stati Uniti, poi a Montreal in Canada dove si parla il francese e poi a Toronto sempre in Canada ma dove si parla...



[il fuoco]

— Assomiglia alla periferia di Reggio, disse Giovanni guardando dal finestrino del taxi che correva lungo Harlem. Da poco il sole era sorto ma faceva ancora freddo e qualche barbone si scaldava al fuoco di un bidone che fungeva da braciare.

— A me pare Palermo... disse Antonio... ti piace New York?...

— Be' fino ad ora non abbiamo visto granché, a parte l'azienda del nostro concorrente e quel ponte dove... lo sai mi piacerebbe tanto andare al luna-park... disse Giovanni sospirando e guardando Antonio con occhi concupiscenti.

— Ti ci vedi domani, dopo che incontriamo zio Pasquale ce ne andiamo a Coney Island... c'è anche il mare... Antonio chiuse gli occhi e sorrise. Tutto era andato bene, il pacchetto contenente il primo dei concorrenti di Don Cirillo era già stato spedito via fiume. Era stato un lavoro fatto bene, preciso e pulito. E anche il cliente aveva cooperato. Adesso si potevano riposare per qualche ora.

— Italians? Italianos? chiese il tassista gridando.

Il volto di Giovanni si illuminò.

— Sei italiano anche tu? chiese mentre il tassista sfiorava con l'automobile un vecchio negro ubriaco.

— No, no, rispose il tassista, I'm Colombian, ...italianos ah? italiani mafia...

Giovanni toccò il calcio della pistola e guardò Antonio con occhi bovini

— Ci prende per il culo? io lo stendo... Antonio posò la sua mano sul braccio di Giovanni e bisbigliò.

— No, son tutti così a New York... non ti preoccupare...sono tutti stereotipi... poi richiuse gli occhi, allungò le gambe e si stese sul comodo schienale.

— Forse hai ragione tu, bisbigliò Giovanni imitando Antonio che riaprì gli occhi guardò incuriosito il faccione di Giovanni e disse al tassista

— Just keep driving! chiuse gli occhi e si riaddormentò. Forse Giovanni lo stava guardando con occhi pieni di gratitudine.

[la famiglia]

Urlava e strepitava come un bambino Giovanni mentre la ruota di Coney Island lo portava sempre più in alto.

Antonio si sentiva imbarazzato per quelle urla infantili di gioia e poi soffriva di vertigini e quindi decise di attendere la fine della corsa fumandosi una sigaretta e camminando tra gli stands. Infine raggiunse la spiaggia e si fermò a pochi centimetri dall'acqua. Quando il giro finì Giovanni raggiunse con un sorriso smagliante Antonio sulla spiaggia ancora deserta. Poiché Antonio fissava l'oceano, Giovanni smise di chiamarlo e si avvicinò umilmente.

— Che città New York... grazie... disse Giovanni.

— Non mi chiedi che lingua parlano a Montreal? — disse senza voltarsi Antonio.

Giovanni fece finta di non sentire e guardò anche lui l'oceano. Era ancora presto e solo allora le prime famiglie apparivano sulla spiaggia. I bambini precedevano gioiosi, coppie di genitori carichi di ombrelloni, sdraio e ghiacciaie portatili.

— Ho nostalgia dei miei figli, disse Giovanni.

— Se tutto andrà bene saremo presto a casa... a Montreal dobbiamo contattare un prete ed un fedele, li incontreremo entrambi in chiesa... a Toronto troveremo le istruzioni... io dico che in meno di una settimana sarai a casa ad abbracciare la famiglia, disse stranamente condiscente Antonio.

— Posso farti una domanda Antonio? chiese umilmente Giovanni.

Antonio senza voltarsi fece un cenno con il capo.

— Perchè non hai una famiglia? chiese Giovanni scavando un buchino nella sabbia con la scarpa.

— Come la tua? chiese scontrosamente Antonio, forse infastidito dalle urla dei mocciosi che si rincorrevano sulla spiaggia.

— No, una tua famiglia, rispose umilmente Giovanni. Volevo dire non ti fa paura la morte? non hai paura di non lasciare nulla dietro di te?

— Per esempio un cadavere nel fiume Hudson? sibilò Antonio.

— A me non piace la solitudine, non mi piace stare solo, ho bisogno di una famiglia... disse Giovanni ...mi piacciono i bambini, mi piace sedermi a tavola quando tutti sono allegri... non ti fa paura una vita senza affetti? e poi in qualcuno devi avere fiducia...

Giovanni non sapeva se guardare Antonio e spinse dolcemente con il piede una palla che rotolava verso di loro, il bambino lo guardò pieno di gratitudine e sorrise.

[la fede]

Antonio e Giovanni si sedettero ai lati del confessionale e bussarono entrambi alla grata. Il prete aprì a Giovanni mentre Antonio continuava a bussare.

— Attendez, attendez s'il vous plait, disse il prete che aprì l'altra grata per parlare ad Antonio.

— Va en paix, tu as mon absolution, disse Antonio al prete stupito e sparò attraverso la finestrella con le sua piccola calibro con il silenziatore. Il prete colpito alla tempia fece un sussulto e si accasciò, gli occhi aperti, le mani che stringevano il rosario.

Giovanni rimase al suo posto mentre Antonio entrò nel confessionale, indossò la tonaca del prete e si sedette sul suo cadavere.

Come tutti i giorni la vittima entrò in chiesa e si inginocchiò nel confessionale.

Attese pazientemente che il prete terminasse la confessione con Giovanni e guardò sorridente il prete quando aprì la grata.

— Père, je viens confesser mes péchés, sussurrò la vittima.

— As-tu commis des péchés charnels ?

— Non, mon Père, la luxure me dégoûte.

— Quelle sorte de péchés as-tu donc commis ? chiese Antonio.

— Les livres ont été consignés mais pas encore distribués et il semble qu'ils contiennent plusieurs coquilles... disse il fedele.

— Mais t'es-tu repenti mon fils ? chiese Antonio mentre avvitava il silenziatore alla sua pistola. Poi guardò quel cilindro, quell'oggetto così innocuo, così anonimo, più fedele di un fedele. Ma che cos'era in fondo se non un cilindro con un buco?

Era come un tunnel infinito dove la vita scivolava come acqua lungo una grondaia. Forse insospettito il fedele non rispose alla domanda di Antonio che decise di terminare la confessione.

— Va en paix, tu as mon absolution ainsi qu'une petite pénitence ! così detto Antonio appoggiò la canna della pistola sulla grata. Il cliente guardò quel cilindro nero, lo riconobbe e disse: Mon Dieu, pardonnez-moi, I pochi fedeli del mattino non sentirono quel suono grave o forse lo scambiò per uno di quei suoni che confusi con lo sfrigolio delle candele corroborano la fede di colui che crede.

Giovanni era già alle spalle del cliente e trattenne il corpo del fedele dalla caduta all'indietro, quindi lo acconciò appoggiando la testa del morto alla finestrella.

Antonio lasciò il prete nella sua posizione di fede con gli occhi rivolti al cielo e uscì dal confessionale indossando la tonaca.



Photos by Josef Geranio

Antonio e Giovanni uscirono lentamente dalla deserta cattedrale di Notre Dame e camminarono verso l'uscita, Giovanni sulla porta si voltò verso l'altare e fece un rapido segno della croce.

— Non mi piace ammazzare un prete, disse Giovanni mentre il taxi si dirigeva verso l'aeroporto, porta male, anche se...

— Anche se?

— Be' da una chiesa è più facile volare in Paradiso... disse seriamente Giovanni.

— Êtes-vous Italiens? chiese il tassista.

— Se dice mafiosi lo ammazzo, disse Giovanni.

— Ma sì ammazzalo... disse Antonio e chiuse gli occhi.

[l'acqua]

Antonio e Giovanni aspettavano sulla banchina l'arrivo del ferry che li avrebbe portati sull'isoletta che affiora dal lago davanti a Toronto.

— Qualcuno dovrebbe passarci le istruzioni sul traghetto... disse Antonio.

Mentre Antonio comprava i biglietti, Giovanni entrò in un negozio da dove ritornò con un pacco di giornali.

— Ma quanto pesano i giornali a Toronto... disse trafelato Giovanni.

— È il paese della carta questo, rispose Antonio.

— Antonio tu che sai l'inglese guarda se c'è qualche articolo su di noi... chiese Giovanni.

— Ho già letto i giornali in albergo, scrivono che un falso prete ha steso il vero prete ed uno degli uomini più fedeli e morigerati della comunità di Montreal, ma la polizia brancola nel buio... disse conciso Antonio. ...parlano di qualcuno venuto da fuori... ma stasera noi partiamo... e tu presto potrai ricongiungerti alla tua famiglia... sei contento? ... chiese Antonio.

— E tu cosa farai? chiese Giovanni.

— Magari andrò qualche giorno a caccia...

— Io t'ho capito Antonio, disse Giovanni sorprendendo Antonio, credo proprio d'averti capito...per te uccidere è una missione... sei come un prete...

— No, non credo proprio... disse Antonio e sentì come una strana sensazione di fastidio, forse perché non credeva che Giovanni fosse capace di tali pensieri, forse perché gli faceva piacere che Giovanni pensasse a lui, affezionato come un cane dagli occhi umidi e dolci, bovini. Ma quella sensazione di malessere svanì non appena i passeggeri alle loro spalle cominciarono a spingere per riempire il traghetto.

Giovanni e Antonio si sedettero all'esterno a poppa del traghetto. Faceva ancora freddo e Antonio guardava i blocchi di ghiaccio ormai isolati naufraghi nella sterminata massa d'acqua e condannati a sciogliersi da quel sole ancora timido.

— Ma d'inverno il traghetto come fa a navigare? chiese Giovanni.

— D'inverno il traghetto non va, il lago è tutto ghiacciato...

— ...e la gente che abita sull'isola?

— La gente aspetta che l'inverno finisca... disse Antonio meccanicamente senza guardare Giovanni che appoggiò un braccio alla vita di Antonio e la canna del silenziatore, coperta da un giornale, sul suo petto. Antonio vide il cilindro di metallo nero toccare il suo cuore, vide quel piccolo congegno, innocente, anonimo, freddo e triste appoggiato sul petto e forse pensò a quel lungo tunnel dove sarebbe caduto come acqua che scivola dalla grondaia. Giovanni sparò.

La sirena della partenza coprì il rumore sordo dello sparo e Giovanni tenne in equilibrio il corpo di Antonio e quindi dolcemente lo depositò su una sedia per i passeggeri.

— Se avessi avuto una famiglia qualcuno ti avrebbe vendicato... sussurrò Giovanni all'orecchio di Antonio ed

aggiunse, scommetto che ti è piaciuto fare il prete nel confessionale...

Antonio rimase con gli occhi aperti che parevano seguire le evoluzioni di un gabbiano e Giovanni abbandonò il traghetto in partenza fendendo la fila dei passeggeri.

[l'aria]

— Can I have a beer? chiese Giovanni all'assistente di volo.

— What kind of beer sir? chiese cerimoniosamente l'hostess.

— A light one, rispose Giovanni, please...

La bionda, elegante e bella signora che sedeva di fianco a Giovanni lo guardò e lanciò un gridolino di piacere.

— I love your accent!

— I love yours, disse Giovanni fissandola con occhi sensuali, are you by chance from Quebec?

— Are you Italian?

— Yes my dear, may I offer you something to drink?

— Thank you Mr... disse la bionda signora.

— Giovanni, je m'appelle Giovanni...

— What a beautiful name, you Italians are so... gentle... so charming... disse la bionda signora con voce incrinata dai singulti di piacere e ammirazione.

Giovanni fece un cenno all'attendente di volo, guardò la bionda signora e chiese:

— Wine would be fine?

— Perfect, perfetttto!

— A bottle of white wine please and two glasses, please forget about the beer, disse con gentilezza perentoria Giovanni all'assistente di volo.

— You Italians are so refined, but do you know what people say? They say that Italians are all maffiosi.

— Ce n'est que des stéréotypes, crois-moi ma chère, et quel est votre nom?

— Gisèle.

L'attendente di volo portò il vino e due bicchieri, Giovanni versò il vino e alzò il bicchiere.

— À votre beauté, aux stéréotypes et à Antonio!

— Antonio?

— Un ami prêtre qui s'est fait missionnaire dans un pays très lointain...

— Bon, à la santé d'Antonio... Are you going home? Do you have family?

— No! ma chérie, family is just trouble, rispose Giovanni rialzando il bicchiere:

— À la vôtre, belle Gisèle!

— ...et aux stéréotypes aussi, tout en souhaitant qu'il y en ait des justes et des erronés! aggiunse maliziosa la signora.

Giovanni guardò la bionda e bella signora, e pensò che Don Cirillo sarebbe stato contento. ■

NE PEZ



COU- PAS!

Illustration : Jacques Cournoyer

— **A**llô ? Allô ? Tiens, y a personne. Je pense qu'il va falloir que je laisse un message.

(Shit, another answering machine. Another fucking message. Who's afraid of speaking to machines ? Me. I hate that. And I have to speak in french. Oh, my God. How humiliating it is. My french is awful. Aw-ful.)

— Ouwi, bonchour. Je appelle de la New York. Je...

— Allô ?

— Oh, là vous être ? Je pensé speaké à le machine de la voix enregistre avec vous.

— Non, je sortais de la douche, je suis encore toute mouillée. Ciel, je parle à un inconnu toute nue ! Vous ne m'en voulez pas ? J'espérais justement un téléphone et je ne voulais pas prendre le risque de le rater.

— Vous dire ?

— Ben oui, bare, nude, naked. A star naked.

— A what ?

— Humm... stark naked. I'm sorry, I have misery with my englitche.

— ???

— Allô ? Vous êtes toujours en ligne ?

— Je pas comprendre.

— Oui, de la misère, des problèmes. Mon anglais est nul. J'ai un peu honte. Vivre à Montréal, en Amérique du Nord, et parler si mal l'anglais. Shame, shame on me.

— Oh, ma française est pauvre aussi, très pauvre. Quand je la parle, j'ai toujours un pied dans la bouche.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS CHASSAY

*Est un vieux « routard »
de l'université et du journalisme
à Montréal.*

*Depuis 1989 il navigue entre le
roman (Obsèques, Les ponts
chez Leméac) et la recherche
(Le jeu des coïncidences; La
vie mode d'emploi de Georges
Perec chez HMH/Castor
astral). Collaborateur, auteur,
puis directeur de plusieurs publi-
cations. La littérature reste son
champ de prédilection.*

— Vous voulez bien attendre une seconde ? J'ai un peu froid, je vais m'essuyer. I will clean myself.

— If you insist... (well, after all, my french is not so bad...)

— Bon, ça va mieux, j'ai même passé un t-shirt, c'est moins obscène.

— insane ?

— No, obscene. I am not an obscene girl, I'm just ok. I'm an alright girl. Just fine. I don't like to be pussy pussy, you know.

— Hum... I'm calling from New York...

— Wow ! Made it ! Just enough gas ! Give me water ! No more land ! We can't

go any further 'cause there ain't no more land !

— I beg your pardon ?

— C'est dans *On the Road*. C'est Neal Cassady qui dit ça, en arrivant devant San Francisco pour la première fois avec Sal. À chaque fois qu'un anglophone me parle d'une grande ville américaine, je récite ça, d'un coup. C'est le seul moment où je peux dire plus de quatre mots de suite en anglais sans faire de faute. Et puis c'est tellement beau ce passage, avec les « eleven mystic hills with the blue Pacific ». Vous aimez Jack Kerouac ?

— Yes, indeed. Je lurai louvre de Kerouac à la complete.

— Louvre ?

— Yes, the complete works.

— Ah, l'œuvre.

— Yes, I mean l'œuf.

— Donc, vous êtes New Yorkais.

— No, I live in Toronto, but I have been in New York for two months now.

— Toronto ? Bon, c'est moins intéressant que New York. Et c'est plus cher. Mais c'est pas pire qu'habiter à Montréal. Sauf que Montréal est moins cher. You know, less expensive. Moins expansif.

— Yes, I know. I like Montreal. I was living in Montreal three years ago.

— Ah oui, sur quelle rue habitez-vous ? Ah zut, ça dégoutte. Je me suis mal essuyée. J'ai de l'eau qui me coule entre les cuisses. Enfin... Vous savez que c'est assez émoustillant de se laisser aller comme ça à parler de ce qui se passe sur son corps à un inconnu ? Vous me croirez pas mais je le dis

— Bye. ■

A surrealist black and white illustration of a man's head in profile, facing left. Instead of a mouth, a telephone receiver is positioned as if it were being spoken into. The receiver is dark and has a coiled cord that extends upwards and then curves back down towards the receiver. The man's face is rendered with soft shading, showing his nose, eye, and ear. The background is a textured, mottled grey. The overall style is reminiscent of mid-20th-century surrealist art.

A steal at this price

T

he rental agent rapped on the outer door. She dropped her cigarette on the porch and ground it into the cement with her shoe. She glanced at her watch, as if to say this appointment would make her late for the next one. She rapped on the door again.

"I really shouldn't show you this place," she said. "It needs to be cleaned and painted. You're going to have to use your imagination." The man peeked through the front window. "We have good imaginations," he said. His wife smiled.

They were new to Montreal.

The rental agent jerked the outer door open, and a pile of advertising flyers fell onto the porch. She kicked them aside with the point of her shoe.

She took a ring of keys from her bag and began to try them one by one in the lock of the inner door, twisting each key impatiently from side to side. The way the lock rattled, the man thought the door would open with a stiff push.

Finally the agent found the right key. She opened the door and stepped across the threshold quickly, as if she had been trained to sniff and pass judgement in an instant. The man and the woman followed.

The place had sounded perfect in the ad: ground floor, sunny kitchen and dining room, three bedrooms. Parking in the rear. The man and the woman were optimistic. As they stepped into the living room, the woman stopped smiling.

In the centre of the room was a large grey sofa which had recently been used as a bed. It was covered with a red blanket and a yellow pillow, and there were piles of newspapers on the floor. The room smelled of sleep, intimate and unavoidable.

The agent moved through the apartment, trailing her perfume behind her like a scarf. The man was grateful for her smell. He imagined burying his face in the fur of her coat, and breathing deeply.

He could hear her snapping on lights in another room. "Don't mind the mess," she called. "It needs a good cleaning, that's all. It's a very big apartment for this area. It's a steal at this price." The man and the woman looked at each other. There was a pair of slippers on the floor near the sofa.

The living room opened up into a dining room piled high with newspapers. Thousands of newspapers. No one had dined in the room in years. There was no room. There were stacks of papers everywhere, in every corner, on every surface.



Photos by Josef Geranio

JOE FIORITO

There's something about sweet grass that grows in northern Ontario that has produced this poet and freelance writer. He won the '96 National Newspaper Award for his columns in The Gazette.

"The Montreal Star," said the man. "That's out of business, isn't it?"

"You can throw all this out," said the agent.

"Who lives here now?" asked the woman.

"Let's take a look at the kitchen," said the agent, leading the way. The kitchen floor was crooked and tiled with red and white linoleum. More papers. Whoever owned the slippers had been a hoarder. The agent picked through some mail on the sideboard. This place would burn forever, thought the man.

"Who lives here?" asked the woman.

"An old man lived here by himself," said the agent.

Past tense, thought the man. The agent lit a cigarette and dropped the match into the sink. The tap was dripping, and the match made a tiny hiss.

"Don't let the look of the place put you off. Get rid of the papers and this place will clean up very well. A little paint and a little soap and water is all you need."

"How long did he live here?" asked the man.

"What happened to him?" asked the woman.

"He had the place for thirty years", said the agent.

"He was no housekeeper," said the woman.

"A New York Times from '82," said the man.

The agent smiled professionally. The kitchen stove was old, the kind that had legs, and it stood next to a small yellow refrigerator. "Come and see the bedrooms," said the agent. "You'd kill for this in New York."

We're not in New York any more, thought the man. They followed the agent down a hallway. The light was burned out. The hall was dark.

The first door on the right was a bathroom. The man looked in. The bathroom smelled. The glass in the window over the tub had been painted green. "I guess the paint's instead of a curtain," said the woman.

"I think you're right," said the man. The rental blew a delicate stream of smoke through her red lips.

"Why is the old man giving up the place?" asked the man. "Is he going into a home? Does he have family here?"

"I have no idea", said the agent as she walked down the hall. "He had a long lease, and the rent was very inexpensive."

The man whispered to his wife, "I'll bet he died in here." The woman grimaced and looked away.

The rental agent said over her shoulder, "There's room for a washer and dryer. You can park in the lane all year round. There are three bedrooms back here."

The first room was as spare as a monk's, with a bare floor and a dresser, a cot and a chair. There was a crucifix on the wall. On the dresser was a little Statue of Liberty. Next to it was a gold-framed snapshot of three small children, a boy and two girls, holding hands.

"These must have been his children," said the woman.

"All this can be moved out quickly," said the rental agent. "A coat of paint and it looks like new. You could use one of these rooms as an office." She stood in the hall, writing something in a thick leather appointment book. Cigarette ash fell onto the floor. The couple looked at her, and at each other.

"We'll have to talk about it," said the man. The woman looked into a closet. The rental agent closed her book. She said, "Here's my card. It's not necessary to decide anything this minute. Imagine it with new paint. We can clean all this out. Call me in a day or two, once you've made up your mind."

The man smiled and walked with the agent through the kitchen and the dining room, past the piles of newspapers. The woman lingered in the bedroom for a moment, looking at the photo on the dresser.

She could hear her husband's voice. She could hear the sound of keys rattling in the rental agent's hands. A place like this in New York would be a steal, she thought. She took one last look on her way out.

She joined her husband on the porch. The rental agent locked the door. The couple stepped onto the sidewalk, breathing deeply. The smell of the apartment seemed to cling to them, as if it were woven into their clothes.

"Call me in a day or two," the rental agent waved and smiled as she buttoned her fur. "Good bye," said the couple.

They got in their car. The man put the key in the ignition and sat with his hands on the wheel. "Did you see the picture on the dresser?" He rolled down his window and took a deep breath. He put the car in gear and pulled into traffic.



Entre Nueva York y Montréal

MARIA FABIOLA PARDO

Maria Fabiola Pardo ya conocida en Colombia después de unas publicaciones de poemas y ensayos filosóficos en revistas literarias marginales, ha exportado sus actividades intelectuales. De los barrios bajos de Bogotá a los barrios trans-culturales de Montreal, esta filósofa de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia adelanta actualmente una maestría en Ciencia Política en l'Université de Montréal.

La revista Vice Versa, de dudosa fama, tiene la honradez de ser elegida por estos fines académicos.

El tren avanza por la ruta de regreso a Montréal, pasa el agua como una capa de plata sobre la superficie de la tierra, más allá las montañas grises del invierno se extienden serenamente. Puentes de hierro atraviezan los ríos, largos y delgados. Cuando el río se mancha de nieve pienso en Montréal y el viento afuera afilando sus noches de hielo, todo inmóvil en medio de un silencio divino. Más al norte, más al frío, más el río que se tensa, el mismo río que me llevó a New York hace tres días y ahora me devuelve a Montréal.

Cuando el tren comenzó a adentrarse en New York, un teatro de luces, como puentes, como casas, como estrellas, reflejaba su coreografía silenciosa sobre la oscuridad de un gran río. Entramos lentamente en una red de estructuras metálicas y rastros de abandono como en las entrañas de un monstruo mecánico, tuneles oscuros, estaciones de tren enterradas entre desperdicios industriales y depósitos de basura, alumbradas por algunos focos de luz ocre y tierra. El tren nos condujo como en un ritual siniestro hasta el final del viaje.

Caminamos en la estación del metro, siento New York extendiendo sus primeras olas humanas, olas de todos los colores y sabores. La medida de las miradas establece

la temperatura, es caliente, muy caliente. Caminamos entre ese torrente humano dentro de un escenario creado para probar, viejas columnas de hierro pintadas de colores vivos, muros desgastados, largos y tenues hilos de ferrocarril.

El primer contacto con el cielo de New York lo tuvimos cuando el metro emergió del río sobre las calles del gran Queens, la presencia de la ciudad pesaba y atraía como un misterio. Esa noche mi amigo Daniel y yo volvimos a encontrarnos después de años de separación. El salió de Colombia cuando los tiempos empezaban a ponerse malos y las ansias de la vida se perdían en la soledad y la rutina, yo salí cuando los tiempos eran realmente irresistibles.

Daniel y yo extendíamos desde la adolescencia las alas de la cólera. El mundo que nos tocaba por suerte nos castigaba el espíritu y nuestros intentos solitarios y furiosos por abrir huecos hacia la otredad se desvanecían en noches alcohólicas y delirios poéticos que escapaban por la ven-

tana de nuestro cuarto y se perdían en el amanecer, entre el olor del pan y las mandarinas frescas a esa hora en que las primeras palomas salen a tomar el sol. Caminamos tanto por las calles de Bogotá, que la sangre se nos pegaba a los zapatos y una ola de suspiros de otro mundo curaba nuestras ansias mutuas.

Yo llegué a Montréal con el sonido de los disparos incrustado en la memoria y tenía miedo de tocar la tierra que me tomaba por los pies. Todo era más grande o más pequeño, el torrente de hombres se parecía y desaparecía en las calles había tanto aire para respirar que me faltaba espacio en los pulmones. Mi mirada de extranjera se ocultaba en mis ojos azules, podía ver rostros de todos los continentes intercambiando sus caminos. Entraba en lo desconocido, en el silencio y la soledad, esos dos sentimientos que nombran desde siempre la tórrida condición del extranjero.

La tarde tiene sol y algunas casas creciendo en la distancia, el tren avanza, sombras de altos pinos se dibujan sobre la helada superficie, aguas congeladas donde el pasto crece y algunos troncos se desnudan. Atardece lentamente, yo vuelvo con mi recuerdo al sonido de las calles de New York, a su encanto diabólico. Mis ojos rastrean los detalles y la sensualidad de su faz

Photograph: Giovanni Facchin

empedrada, Keith, un amigo de Daniel, nos cuenta de calles y edificios, el habla en las esquinas agitando sus manos y sus cabellos como si fuera el centro del mundo. Observo a Daniel, tiene aún el rostro niño, la risa loca y alucinada, y muchas palabras saltando de su boca. Caminamos, la noche es total, New York murmura, canta, a veces grita, ruge entre los trenes, yo apenas si respiro. Keith cuenta alguna anécdota erótica ocurrida en el cuarto de uno de esos lujosos hoteles. Tantéo la oscuridad en la intimidad de los pequeños bares, las calles estan frescas invocando los vientos.

La ventana del tren en que me desplazo me regala a la tarde exquisita, el cielo se refleja azul sobre los bloques de hielo que flotan en la superficie de un lago grandísimo rodeado de arboles secos y playas congeladas.

Los primeros meses en Montréal me azotaron los ojos con una desbandada de sentimientos extremos, cada día en la estación el estruendo de las máquinas que pasaban y se perdían me devolvían la consciencia de mi destierro, tanto silencio quemaba en mi boca!

Montréal y su silencio de agua contenida. La sobrevuelo con el peso de mis botas de invierno, siento la caricia de la

nieve melancólica, me extravió entre las calles donde las palabras se transforman en espejismos sucesivos, a cada paso lento y pesado. A veces la fascinación se prendía a mi costado, entonces Montréal se abría como una fruta y sentía sus olores, la riqueza de sus contrastes, el rincón de sus rincones y esas recompensas nocturnas, cuando las largas figuras humanas y oscuras se deslizaban lentamente en la noche que la nieve cubría. Entonces sentía la belleza de esta ciudad, lo delicado de su contacto, su plenitud sin bordes; me salvaba de mi propia conciencia y empezaba a mirar como quien mira, desde afuera que es desde adentro y sabía ahí que yo era parte de ese paisaje humano, de esa hilera interminable de hombres que se tensaba en el frío de enero, en el aire sin perfumes, seco en la garganta líquido en las miradas.

Cuando llegué a New York, ya el muro de las distancias había sido derribado, Daniel y yo podíamos caminar las calles monstruosas con todos nuestros restos intactos, con el sentimiento reencontrado de ser y no ser al mismo tiempo. En nuestro peregrinaje mi ansiedad agotaba el espacio entero, quería deborar con una mirada el secreto poder de esa ciudad y el secreto como en Montréal lo presentía en cada

forma humana, en cada intersticio donde se nombra lo imposible, en la diversidad de los habitantes taciturnos trozando las avenidas y las luces de colores. Aquí y allá, todo forastero puede soñar con el centro del mundo, concentrarse y confundirse, gozar del placer de espiar al universo y deslizarse en el tiempo como en un sueño larguísimo.

Daniel me cuenta que los latinoamericanos en New York tienen los dos pies bien puestos en la tierra y que en cada esquina hay un latino contando sus historias. Yo no puedo decir lo mismo de Montréal, aquí todos estamos dispersos librando nuestras pequeñas grandes batallas de exilio y sin embargo, yo siento que en algún lado de la noche en Montréal se está escribiendo la historia de las historias, la que cuenta todos los orígenes, maleficios y bendiciones, todas las muertes y renacimientos del mundo.

El río que me lleva me trae y yo como los ríos no tengo descanso. A Daniel y a mi nadie nos vio salir, ni nadie nos vio entrar, los dos andamos de espaldas como quien va de frente y que nadie nos pregunte sobre la suma de los rostros, o en que pedazo de la calle oscura se duerme el infinito y el pequeño dragoncito que se perdió en el laberinto. ■



Photograph: Giovanni Facchin

SLUMMING

IN GREENTOWN

ROBERT M. SMITH

It has been said that Robert M. Smith is an underground cult figure. His first volume of poetry was called I've Been So Happy Since I Got My Lobotomy. He has been giving poetry readings in Montreal and Ottawa for nearly twenty years now. Strange twists of fate have led him to work as a translator. He lives with his two lovely daughters, Isabelle and Cordelia.

He is, and plans to remain, 47 years old.

I am hanging out in a restaurant in the West Village, on the corner of Bleeker and Fourth, digging the scene, one afternoon, enjoying the madness of the kids around me, when ENTER JIMMY: a black guy, around 35 years old, with a thin line of a mustache and a fixed stare, wearing a suit and a white shirt and tie under his winter coat and a green Tyrolian hat. He walks up to me and sits down at my table and says to me in a guttural voice, "Listen, kid, I'll find you a place to sleep tonight if you come outside to the demonstration and pee on the American flag."

I step outside with him, ready to try anything once. I do need a place to crash, and I haven't had a better offer today. There are many New York policemen surrounding the demonstrators, so I don't risk peeing on the flag. I have no idea what the issue is. Someone mentioned Martin Luther King has just been assassinated yesterday, but I am only 18 years old, and I don't know who is Martin Luther King. I thought blacks are rioting all over the USA because they wanted their freedom. What do I know about American politics anyway? The other day, I was tripping in the East Village, and some guys were suggesting they should shoot their landlords and occupy the buildings with guns. But I pretended I didn't hear them. You know, you have to act cool, eh?

I have just come down to the Big Apple from Montreal a couple of weeks ago. I had boarded the train at Central Station with a suitcase loaded with the books of Antonin Artaud and André Breton and a change of clothes. I was prepared to live a bohemian life, or so I thought. I dropped acid last fall, in 1967, dropped out of Loyola College and took to the drug scene. The people I turned on with in NDG in Montreal thought they were fashionable. In my circles, there was no awareness of the war in Viet Nam, the military-industrial complex or the condition of blacks. We're apolitical, man. My friends used to listen to Donovan and the Beatles, and when the Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Heart Club Band album was

released, several of my college friends tried acid. It was just a fashion show: turn on, tune in, fake it. Some people even used words like "psychedelic." And in these circles, no one relates to the revolution brewing just a few blocks away in the French side of Montreal.

People go around saying, "It's cool man," so I guess everything is cool. You are never supposed to get uptight about anything. You don't hassle with people over issues. You know, we would turn on a college girl to marijuana, she would break down and weep and hide in the corner of our living-room. Well, you didn't hassle. It



was her problem. She wasn't being cool. You never express emotion. Especially negative emotion.

Consequently, I was quite shocked, the other day, when I arrived in New York City, and I sat at a table in this same pizza joint on the corner of Bleeker and Fourth, to play the bohemian, like Tristan Tzara or Antonin Artaud, you know, and five minutes later a fight breaks out in the restaurant, at the next table over. There was no warning. Two men were talking, a husky waiter wearing a white shirt and a customer. Suddenly, the waiter grabs a chair and breaks it over the customer's head. You know, it never occurred to me, like, "You don't mess with these people. Some of them are very, very angry." My conscience never warned me. It never told me there might be a problem here. I never thought of walking out of Greenwich Village and never coming back. I just thought, "That's

cool, man." Heaven knows anything goes. I am a tad irresponsible, perhaps, because I don't care. Perhaps, because I am an acid-head and I have been taught not to respond. Would you say I am wet behind the ears? Hey, no, I am a tough guy. Someone gets a chair broken over his head, I must be in the right place. In any case, I am not reading the writing on the wall. You don't ask questions. You just assume everything is cool. You have to act cool. It's all in the role-playing. You know, you grow your hair long, and then people figure you are cool. And then you can cop an ounce on the street.

Meanwhile, the guy with the Tyrolian hat, who is called Jimmy, isn't wasting any time. He is panhandling. He takes me through all the New York underworld that night. He is a professional panhandler, from what I can see, and he is teaching me how to panhandle. He always has a hundred dollars in his pocket, and every time he spends a dime, he panhandles another dime. I see him chasing a pregnant Puerto Rican woman down the street, asking her



for money. This is in the Bronx. There are street vendors everywhere, as well as impoverished immigrants. The lady is yelling at him to leave her alone, and this makes a mere ripple on my hardened consciousness. Come on, Robert, leave the guy alone. He's no good. Get away from this guy. Some guardian angel is whispering this in my head, but I won't listen. I am being cool. Back in Manhattan, I see him walk into Port Authority Bus Terminal and ask an old lady 80 years old for money to go visit his own mother in North Carolina. He needs money for his morphine habit. I see him shove an old wino into a urinal because he was staring at him, back in Washington Square.

Deep down inside, I am scared of Jimmy, because Jimmy is a psychopath. I can see this, but I haven't got a protocol, an excuse, a pretext to get out of the situation. I am tripping on speed, you know, and

Photos by David Gahr

ENVIRONMENTAL VILLAGE

FICTION

by now I've got the shakes, because I am coming down.

Martin Luther King has just been assassinated the day before, and blacks are rioting in Harlem. One older black fellow tells us there is raping and pillaging and looting going on uptown. There it is, I have heard the warning. Get away from here, kid, there is hell to pay. Do you think I should split the scene?

Jimmy takes me to have a drink on a street corner with several of his friends, and I can't understand what they are talking about, except that one older fellow says, "Get that whitey out of here." It's funny, they look like hobos. This is the Bowery, and I am drinking with winos on the Bowery. Something might be wrong here, but I am hanging out, and it must be cool. These guys are dressed in rags, and passing around a bottle of Muscatel. I tell them I don't drink, man, it's not my thing. They are insulted, and Jimmy whisks me off to some other scene.

That evening, Jimmy and I go to see the movie *Bonnie and Clyde*, and we both sleep through it twice. He is on morphine and liquor, and I am popping a lot of Black Beauties in those days, just to try to stay awake. I have been living in Greenwich Village for a couple of weeks, slumming, I guess, sleeping in the park or at various people's houses. I have no more bread, and I don't know how to earn any. It's not cool to hassle over survival, man. You know, like everything is taken care of. The other day, a cat walks up to me and asks me to trade clothes with him. Anything goes. We walk into a public washroom at Washington Square, he puts on my clothes and I put on his clothes. We both walk off in different directions. It never occurred to me, like, maybe this guy might have crabs. Or he might be followed by the cops. Or maybe his clothes are filthy. I don't care. Like it was surrealistic, eh?

Well, surrealism and objective randomness have taken

Jimmy and me back to Port Authority Bus Terminal, where we sleep on benches until the cops chase off all the vagrants with billy-clubs. Then we go to Pennsylvania Station.

Finally, in the morning, Jimmy tells me he wants us to go to the welfare office. He wants me to collect welfare. So he can go visit his mother in North Carolina, of course. Perhaps he needs morphine, what do you think? There is a storm brewing somewhere in New York, in Watts, in Chicago, in Oakland, but I can't hear the thunder rumbling at the horizon. I am not listening. I am cool, man. Something keeps

telling me, get away, Robert, you'll save face some other time. Go back to college.

No. I am making the scene. I am not a quitter.

I walk into the welfare office. I come from a middle-class family in NDG, in suburban Montreal. We speak French at home and I was a French literature student in college. This is freaky, I have never set foot in a welfare office in my life. My father studied under the monks, and is chief translator for the federal government in Montreal. My mother plays bridge and sips tea with the ladies and sits at banquet tables with bishops and lawyers and senators. You know, I never noticed the writing on the wall.

Meanwhile, Jimmy is asleep. This is my chance: I get up and walk out. I leave him there. I can't stand being in a welfare office. I am scared. This is poverty. This is Spanish Harlem. No, it isn't like on television. They don't mention poverty and welfare recipients on *Mod Squad* or *Leave it to Beaver*. Something tells me I have been picked out as a scapegoat.



I bump into Jimmy again at Washington Square around noon that day. Just the guy I don't want to see. He is mad. Very mad. He says to me, "You motherfucker. You left me there. You abandoned me. You turned you back on me. Look at my knuckles." He has blood all over his hands. "I had to beat up six policemen to get out of dat welfare office. Now give me some skin, or you gonna smile from here to here." And he draws his index across his throat, like he is going to slash my throat. So I give him some skin, slapping his hand. "Harder," Jimmy yells. "HARDER!" I slap his hand again and again.

Jimmy parades me around Washington Square, introducing me to all the other street people there. We walks all around the fountain, and Jimmy seems to know everyone there. It is a beautiful spring day in April 1968, in the Brave New World of New York, and I am scared. I hope these

people can't see that I am shivering. I know I am a fool this time. Martin Luther King has been killed by the white Establishment, by an agent of the Memphis police department, and here I am, trying to act cool. Jimmy tells me, "Come on whitey, tell'em where it's at." And I don't know what he means. So I stutter back, "Anarchy is where it's at." And someone shakes his head and tells Jimmy, "Ya man, I know where you at."

Finally, Jimmy takes me into the little church at Washington Square. He kneels down at a pew and pretends to pray for about five minutes. What is he doing? I don't pray. Street people aren't supposed to pray?

He takes me into the corridor and pulls out a small blade. He says to me, "OK, whitey, pull down your pants, or else they gonna find you dead here in the morning." I am terrified, because this guy is big and I think he means business. Oh my God, he means it and he has blown my cool.

I kneel down, and pull down my pants. He puts the knife at my throat and rubs his penis on my behind. Perhaps, just perhaps, I feel extremely embarrassed and humiliated. This goes on for a minute, and then we leave the church. *It is finished*. The scapegoat has been sent into the wilderness, carrying the sins of the Establishment. Lightning has struck. The storm is now brewing in my mind. There was a rumbling of thunder and that was all. As Louis XVI asks his attendant, "Is that a riot?" And the attendant answers, "No, sire. It's a revolution."

He takes me to a restaurant and buys us both a hot dog.

OK. I have had enough. This is the end of denial. I have been raised on denial. I muster up the courage to leave Jimmy at this point and phone my cousin Phoebe, who is doing a B.A. in theology at Fordham University. She is over fifty years old and living in New York City. She comes to find me, once it is too late. She sits me in her car and lectures me, because my hair is long and I am dressed in rags. She gives me twenty dollars, and I take the first train out of New York.

On the way back to Montreal, I am confused, very, very confused. The train is rumbling. You know, I believed all the sixties nonsense about peace and love, and this type of thing is not supposed to happen.

When I get off the train in Montreal that April morning, it is still winter, but that is not why I am shivering. ■

Mio amigo, Mon amour

JORGE LUIS CAMACHO

*Si la a señora Bovary le
hubieran dejado escoger un
seudónimo seguramente hubiera
escogido el de Gustavo Flaubert
(o no lo escogió?). Igualmente,
si a mi me dejaran escoger uno,
escogería el de Jorge Luis
Camacho, ese escritor cubano,
cuya obra ha ido apareciendo en
varias antologías y revistas en
diversos idiomas, España,
Cuba, Alemania, Canada.
Escogería ese seudónimo, (con
su biografía apócrifa y todo),
aun cuando
me obligaran a escribir mi
verdadero nombre que es
por supuesto, Carlos.*

Toronto, primer día del mes de abril.

Aquí encerrada dentro del hospital, escribo más cartas que nunca, y mas a tí que a nadie. Pobre Carlos Enrique, tienes que sufrir otra vez mi español.

Espero que hayas recibido mis dos primeras cartas. Dentro de la segunda habrás encontrado un periódico y un comercial. Estoy segura de que estarán interesados en tu Resume. Yo me entusiasme mucho cuando vi esas dos cosas en el edificio donde sigo mis cursos de baile. Pero no tuve tiempo de leer algunos artículos. Me dirás que opinas de la calidad. Note que no era un periódico literario. Tal vez mañana o pasado mañana, cuando vaya a las librerías de las que te hablé encuentré algo más. Deseo tanto que te mudes a Toronto. Creo

con sinceridad que esto podría ser una gran experiencia para tí.

Yo no quiero seguir viajando. Toronto no es New York, pero la vida es posible aquí. Principalmente porque las gentes que veo por las calles, en el metro, en los mercados, me seducen mucho mas. Hay cantidad de gente diferente. Es un verdadero regalo: italianos, hispanos, negros de Somalia, negros de Jamaica, indios de la India, filipinos, chinos... se oyen tantos idiomas de toda Europa y del Medio Oriente. No puedo vivir en un lugar donde la gente no me seduce. Cuando vengas a Toronto te enseñaré todo eso.

Mi padre todavía no me habla, pero eso me conviene perfectamente. El es un "dolor de anus" (expresión inglesa) cuando esta de buen humor mas que cuando me habla. Por lo menos tengo paz, puedo volver a la casa al final del día (por lo común llego a las diez de la noche), sin tener que divertirlo dos horas.



Anoche tenía una jaqueca terrible. Hubiera debido aceptar fumar un poco de marihuana con mi hermano y mi cuñada. En vez, tuve que esperar tres horas antes de dormir. -A veces tengo la tentación de tomar una de las píldoras de morfina que las enfermeras olvidaron en mi casa. Pero no lo haré jamas porque tengo miedo de hacer una tontería fatal: salir de mi departamento por la ventana y vivo en un piso

quince !. Mi hermano me dijo que él también tuvo esa tentación pero que no lo haría tampoco.

Espero que yo no te aburra demasiado. Estoy esperando con impaciencia una carta de tu parte, una postal, cualquier cosa. Montreal esta muy lejos y no sé cuando vas a venir. Te extraño,

Emma.



Toronto, tercer día del mes de abril.
Hola Carlos Enrique,

Ahora estoy encerrada en el cuarto de mi madre. Mi padre esta en su cuarto. Yo no fui a besarlo cuando llegué del hospital. No sé cuando vamos a volver a hablarnos...

Esta tarde, después de mi curso de Salsa, una mujer rubia muy linda de la clase, vino a hablar conmigo. Era muy simpática y salimos juntas del edificio. Seguimos caminando juntas unos minutos. Cuando supo que yo vivía en Montreal se puso aun mas contenta y me habló de sus amigos cubanos "refugiados" en Montreal. Yo empecé a reírme nerviosa, "amarilla" (una expresión francesa), pero unos minutos mas tarde me alivié al saber que ella no conocía a un cierto Carlos Enrique López. Mis celos desaparecieron enseguida. Y me puse muy contenta al saber que sus amigos no eran nadie más que Felito y Pablo!! Ella se llama Karen. Decía que Cuba había sido "un buen país" para ella, que ella casi se había casado con un cubano, etc, etc. Podrías saludar a F y P de su parte?. Que azar mas cómico, ¿ verdad ?.

POR FAVOR TRATAR CON CUIDADO

Estoy siguiendo estos cursos de ritmos latinos de manera intensiva, porque es mi único placer. Además del hecho de que yo estoy apasionada con la música latina, me gustan las clases de baile de manera general. Hay un ambiente particular, una forma de ternura entre las mujeres, un poco especial. Una ternura pero también rivalidad. Nos vestimos para gustarnos unas a las otras...a menudo nos abrazamos, nos acariciamos de manera fugitiva. Una toca la pierna de la otra preguntándole dónde compró su falda, si es de seda o de algodón, y a veces la profesora contribuye a ese cariño cuando tiene que mostrarnos cómo mover un brazo, el cuello o la rodilla. Hay mucha euforia en todo eso. En Montreal cuando yo volvía a casa después de una clase, estaba nerviosa como después de una fiesta, sabes ?.

Como te dije, estoy leyendo la parte de *A la recherche du temps perdu* que se llama *Sodome et Gomorrhe*. A veces Marcel me hace pensar en tí. Has leído esa parte de la obra de Proust?. En un episodio cómico, Marcel y un hombre chismoso están en un

@//:

salón mirando a un par de muchachas bailar juntas un valse; y el hombre le dice a Marcel: "¿Has notado su manera de bailar juntas? Si yo fuera su padre, no dejaría que mis hijas bailaran así. ¿Ves como sus senos se tocan?. Y todo el mundo sabe que las mujeres toman la mayor parte de su placer por los senos..."

¿Cuál sería tu reacción, Carlos?. Olvidé decir que Marcel está un poquito enamorado de una de esas muchachas, y eso podía traerle cierta desazón. Yo te imagino tener la misma reacción que Marcel.

Dime, mi español es un desastre, ¿verdad?. Creo que te vas a dar cuenta de eso ahora más que nunca. Me voy a acostar

antes de decir más tonterías. Te extraño mucho, Carlos. Tengo ganas de leerte.

Tuya,
E.



Toronto, cuarto día del mes de abril
Hola, mon amour,
Que placer tuve ayer de oír tu voz.

Antes de llamarte estaba casi segura que ya me habías olvidado. Entonces me sorprendió mucho oírte y tener la impresión de que todavía me deseabas. Luego en el hospital me acordaba de tí y tenía que quedarme sola en otro cuarto para pensar en tí. Pero cuando regresé a mi departamento me dejé caer en el recuerdo de tus besos y de muchas otras cosas.

Estaba acostada, desnuda, y tenía que acariciarme pensando en tí porque no podía aguantar el deseo. Recordé aquella vez en tu departamento. Estábamos acostados juntos perpendicularmente sobre tu cama. Tú me estabas besando entre las piernas, y yo mientras tú me estabas dando tanto placer, tenía mis labios encima de tu sexo que yo quiero. Hasta ahora no puedo olvidar la sensación de esta parte de tu miembro debajo de mi lengua ávida. Recuerdo que el placer de lamerla me sorprendió en aquel momento. Era como si su forma fuera un sabor y que yo pudiera probar esa forma, ¿comprendes?.

Y entonces tomé entero en mi boca tu sexo que me parece hecho para estar dentro de mi boca. Hasta el fondo de mi garganta y casi enseguida tú tomaste tu placer que yo tragué después de haberlo tenido en mi boca unos momentos maravillosos...

Esa es una de las escenas que recuerdo y que me afectaba tanto anoche después de haber hablado contigo. Por supuesto, tuve que acariciarme hasta el orgasmo, y cuando me había venido seguía deseándote.

Espero que tú también me sigas deseando, que me perdonaras ésta carta poco decorosa. La verdad, Carlos, es que yo espero que como yo, tú también te hayas acariciado o que te vas a acariciar pensando en mí. Quisiera no haberte "displeased, "deplu" por haber utilizado palabras que no te gusten. Al contrario, espero que te vengas como aquella noche. Perdóname tanto deseo.

Emma.

Toronto, a los veinte días del mes de abril.
Hola Carlos,

Hace algunos días que no te escribo, pero hoy estoy casi forzada a hacerlo. Francois regreso de New York. Esta vez ha venido para quedarse. La universidad de Toronto le ha dado un puesto en el departamento de francés. Sabes que ahora el trabajo de profesor es casi "nomádico."

Ayer Francois y yo conversamos toda la noche. El día que regresó yo estaba en el hospital y el encontré sobre el armario tus cartas. Estaba muy furioso. Esto tal vez te explica mi silencio. Lo siento... tal vez te llame por teléfono, pero si no puedo hacerlo quiero que me entiendas. Realmente lo siento, las cosas pudieron resultar de otro modo.

te quiere,
Emma. ■



Electronic Collage: Guy Verville

The City Without Veils

Excerpted from *Summertime*

PETE FEINBERG

Born in Montreal in 1966, but "a Jewish Mohawk from New York" as he describes himself, he survives in New York doing odd jobs and is a big fan of the Net. Excerpts of *Summertime* were published by Newsgroup in London, where he studied literature for three years, and will be published in full by New House Publishing of Chicago next summer. At present, Feinberg is working on a novel that traces his roots beginning with his Russian grandfather who came to Western Canada and worked for The Hudson Bay Company. His father, David, was the illegitimate son born to a Mohawk princess. He was adopted by the tribe and later committed suicide.

The man burst out of the saffron glass building of the TV centre. He walks decisively, ignoring the voice that calls after him. Shafts of light fall from the mangled sky, black and heavy, crashing onto the cracked Manhattan asphalt. The rain has started again. Nathaniel Haag turns up the collar of his green Aquascutum.

"Professor Haag, stop!" The man hailed this way quickens his step. The high-pitched almost snivelling voice grows persistent, telling him about the woman presenter who didn't 'understand a thing of his arguments', of the need to collaborate with him, of the 'fortune' they could make together.

The footsteps resound on the wet asphalt like blows on a gong. It looks like New York is in the act of liquefying itself; the Manhattan skyscrapers, the hissing Lower East Side streets, the Fifth Avenue shop windows, the tinted limousines moving too slowly in the midnight traffic, the passers-by, shadows in the shadows, 42nd Street fauna. It seems as if the whole continent wants to expel the ice carapace that kept it prisoner for so long. At this end of April cloudbursts are sweeping this city, too full, too bare behind its electric mask. Its very history, one could say, is fleeing through the myriads of drains which run through the streets, east to west. As if the

river which was its neighbour, is flooding, carrying everything away, erasing everything and, in this way, begin the Glacier epic again.

"You've got too much imagination" Moira would have said. But that was only a memory whereas the man who walks ahead of Désiré Ladouceur is definitely flesh & blood. And now he slows down. He stops abruptly and turns right round. Two glaucous orifices sunk in the wrinkle of his eyebrows glare at the young man dressed in black from head to foot. For an instant Désiré Ladouceur sees himself through Haag's eyes, a backward adolescent in thick glasses, cassette machine and fluorescent headset slung over a shoulder - but without his Nikon. If he hadn't forgotten it before taking the plane, he'd have been able to capture the strange gleam which shines in Haag's pupils. Did it express the anger or the arrogance that ugliness brings? His long tuft of grey hair trickled onto his flabby, bloated, cheeks and the crop which served as a neck. Like that, in that pose, infuriated, he resembles a saurian; a saurian which nonetheless knows how to appreciate fine clothes and whose bearing accentuates an asexual, hermaphrodite, hideousness.

"You are an imbecile; you hear! and your article is a load of drivel. A load of drivel!" He repeated these words, articulating each syllable... Then he shuts up, which

makes him even more hideous. The young man stammers out paltry excuses, pretexting it was all down to his editor, that he too hadn't understood. Besides, nobody had a clue about this damned business. Nobody except he and Nathaniel Haag, eminent socio-psychologist, whose recent book confirmed what he, *Désiré Ladouceur*, had known from the start.

"The Killing Singularities", it is true, had been a real letdown for the North American criminologists. Drawing on anthropology, history and psychoanalysis Haag maintained that the series of unexplained murders which were occurring in the cities had something of the nature of a new form of ritual criminality. He claimed that by applying his method one could reasonably anticipate the date and place they'd be carried out. This declaration was laughable at first. But two days after the Huntington Avenue drama it set people on edge. The police questioned Haag for eight hours. His Washington Square apartment was searched from top to bottom. In between time, he became a celebrity with a reputation for being provocative.

The gutter press revealed his fondness for young boys. A rumor persisted that credited him with crimes he would have staged in order to confirm his theory. A letter from his faculty dean arrived, warning him against any further scandal. In short, the private and professional life of Nathaniel F. Haag was turned upside down in a manner far beyond anything he could have dreamed. Yet what disturbed him most was that, despite his achievements, none of his peers had considered it advisable to confirm or invalidate his hypotheses. As if he had unveiled a secret everyone knew about but were unwilling to acknowledge. Nobody was really interested in these theories except this puny reporter, uglier than himself, who wrote for a some small paper on the outskirts of Montreal and was in New York with the sole purpose of meeting him.

They have just left Times Square and entered an heavily-lit zone. Red and mauve neon lighting intermittently claw the leprous facades of shops with shoddy goods. Above them, a pulsing mauve beam comes out of the windows, punctuated by

the stroboscope of a disco. One would like to caricature this city that we wouldn't otherwise have caught out. Two men of medium height, who look like brothers, leave a cabaret. They both have moustaches and wear iridescent shirts under their leather jackets. Their gaze lingers at length on Haag and *Désiré* and the burn of their prying eyes is felt long after they've gone. Haag, in turn, looks mockingly at *Désiré*, and invites him to a café.

Désiré flatly refuses explaining, in the most serious manner possible, that he hasn't 'come for that' but to accomplish a mission of a higher order in which he, Haag, is the striking and indispensable element. Haag looks to the sky, as if trying to find words which are going to resolve the situation. After a moment he speaks to him as if they've suddenly become intimate friends:

But you're not afraid, in fact. Who says I'm not the killer.

Désiré's eyes shine with a strange gleam "I know who the killer is."

... *Moira and Désiré*

Moira waited for *Désiré* to finish his tale. She had her nose pressed against the Altitude restaurant's panoramic window. Her breath, condensating on the cold pane, formed a mist in which she could see the lights of Montreal reflected.

Without admitting it to herself perhaps, this story attracted her already with its violence and mystery. Like the pure black quartz of Mount Royal standing out against the luminous pearly line of the horizon. This block which sucked in all the brightness, keeping captive something unspeakable which committed evil. Maybe that was what had drawn her closer to *Désiré* and made her decide to trust him again with the investigation.

She bent her neck forward and bit her upper lip, its fullness. She turned round. "You really believe in these theories?" she said. *Désiré* smiled, wanted to take *Moira's* hands, but she slipped away. She was already rummaging in her purse to hand him the paper. *Désiré* half-grimaced; it hadn't been published. Willie too had given in. Deep down, that didn't surprise him. *Moira* seemed relieved.

Perhaps she also thought he exaggerated. Perhaps she began to be afraid of him too.

Moira my sweet little lamb, come here, come, I won't hurt you. You smell of lilac. Come with me into the shadow flecked light.

"It's him isn't it. He set you against me." He said. *Moira* looked at him, surprised. Once again *Désiré* had become caught up in his phobias. He created imaginary lovers for her, accused her of feeling differently about him, of wanting to leave him whereas there was nothing between them. Their undersanding was strictly



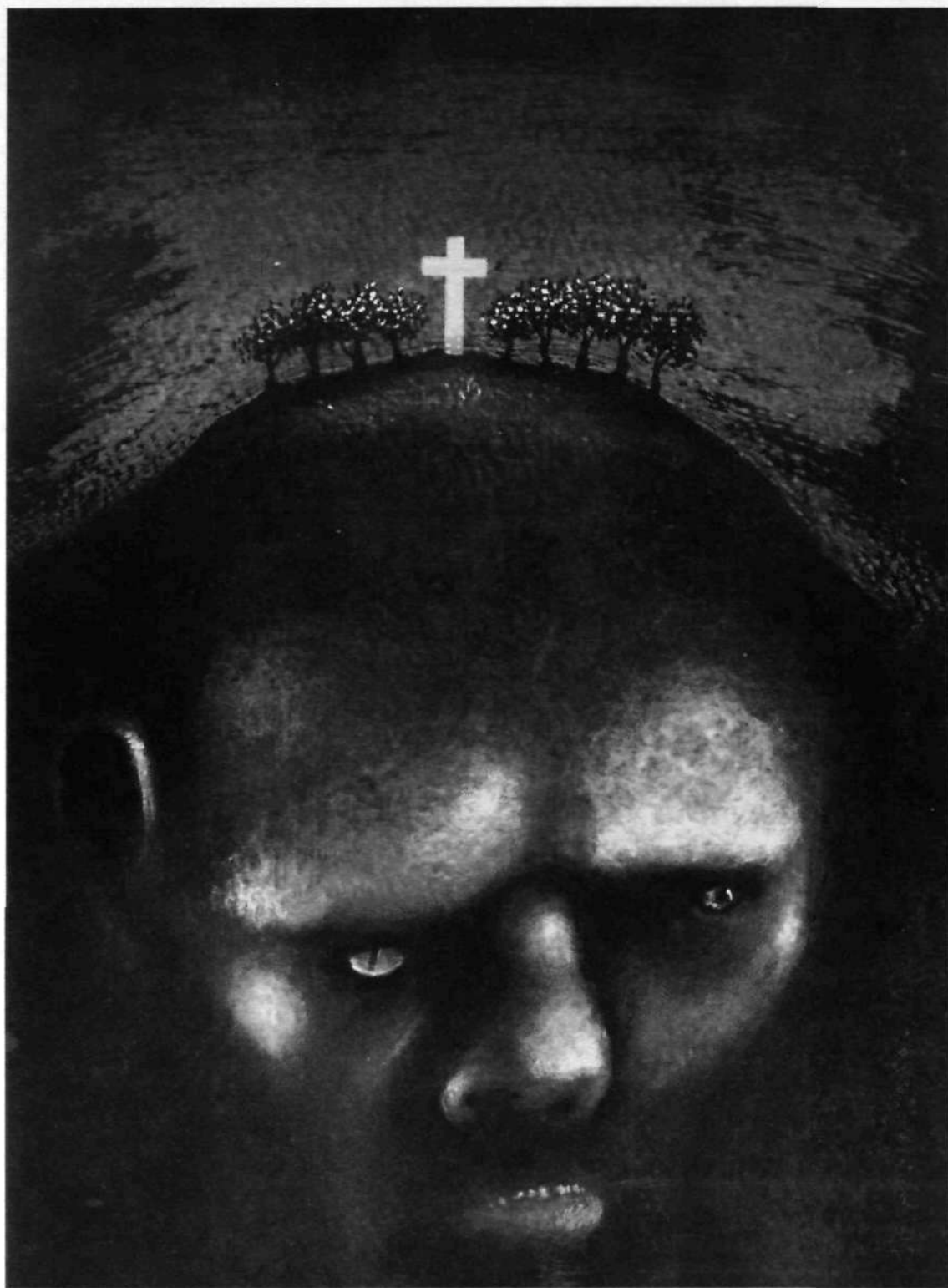


Illustration: Jacques Cournoyer

business. She wanted to find her brother's killer.

His face darkened. To appear composed, she lit a cigarette. The restaurant was almost empty. Strange charcoal drawings on the papered walls represented unfinished half-length portraits; in one corner, a plain mirror where Moira's image was superimposed over Désiré's.

For an instant, they were both confused. Had she noticed the slight hard glint in his eyes. Or had she pretended not to see it, afraid of breaking the ritual that was ordained from the beginning of time. She finally submitted, still fighting back rebelliously. But her rebellion was a pretence; a way of indicating submission.

Leaving Lagauchetière Street, Désiré slowly moved close to her. It was late.

The night liquefies an unstable, cruel, Montréal where space filters through between bodies and things, forcing them to conceal themselves, to become objects. Where is the interior, the exterior? The wet streets, the facades of the buildings on McGill Street, the lit shop windows on St. Catherine Street thrust me back into the mirror, to my geared down anxiety. I knew that Moira was going to leave me.

I knew it from the start. She didn't move when I approached. Her smile seemed suspended in thin air. Like a representation of silence. I understood that it wasn't her who smiled but some other. One who had taken

hold of her body, her face, mimicking her movements. Just like it was her.

What did I do afterwards? I see myself taking the métro, charging down the steps at the Sherbrooke exit and diving into the rue St. Denis. The first strong whiff of dampness came up from the river, for a moment eases the confusion, transformed into an inner burning. What good was it? It was as inescapable as the swirling of the seasons. Moira frees herself from me with imperceptible movements and I find myself once again reduced to my mineral density, to experience gravity. Why deny it; this prospect upsets me. "Moira, Moira. Why have you become so distant from me?" ■

Terra infirma

FICTION

WILLIAM ANSELM

William Anselmi is an old spirit from the hills of Umbria transplanted on Ottawa's Hill. He is spreading his creativity on generations of students in an Italian Department, writing and surfing the Net.

Photographs: Giovanni Facchin

On the reason for leaving things untouched

Suitcases do not necessarily belong to an owner. They exist on their own, with their fill of letters and magazines and suits and dresses, found or again lost cases of identity. It's the spoils of travel, of having to live in a world enamoured by motion, false movements, speed. Perhaps, the exact moves we fake to spell history on our past so as to proclaim an absolute moment, this moment, this present.

A suitcase stranded by the side of a train. It's early spring, drizzle and fog by eleven thirty-seven pm. That brown rectangle in the distance is a message, enigmatic however, unquantifiable as of yet. Take it, make it yours as you descend the stairs, not a soul around since you fell asleep. Carry it with you to your destination and you will take with you another, a possible companion, a mate in a game of chance.

This is how it starts, with a curious theft, perhaps a gesture of good will. After all, in the great hall where heads are nodding and words are orders of a pleasant future, an office might be waiting. The officer seated behind the desk, with a book of model trains in his hands and blood-shot eyes knows your name.

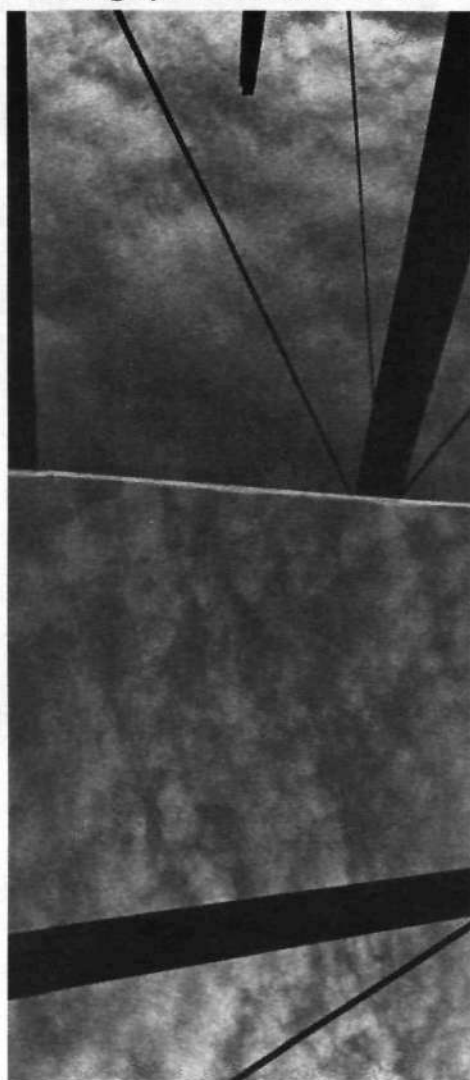
Hey you, where you going with such a bitter load?

Nah, not so heavy, just a couple of suits and some magazines. That's not quite right. You should have said,

I found these vestiges of life. To whom do they belong?

But, it is late. The taxi awaits. You whistle and smell exhaust from structures of survival. Hop in, where are you going?

I am going here. The map you unfold smells of tobacco, the red X is drawn quite resolutely.



On the reasons for touching someone

Just came back?

No.

Long trip?

No.

Tired?

Yes!

Most definitely you could have said without drawing blood. But, your right hand twitches. The suitcase was bitter after all. Yet, you cannot wait in this, your holy silence.

Smoking is permitted. Inhale and exhale, so as to add a certain taste to this trip. Somewhere else, quite far from here, another seventy-three children are dying of hunger, two hundred and four are killed in traffic accidents, a thousand and one are blasted into bits from land-mines, and one dies while gurgling water and tooth-paste; this will pass off as a suicide. Had you had a chance to know these facts, you would have stopped in that bathroom and interviewed the killer.

"Why did you kill yourself this way?" you would have said in a tone reminiscent of this little death, this english farce. The answer would have numbed your wrists, because I was never quite co-ordinated. I happened to swallow the pasty water, and coughed and coughed. I live alone. I suffocate. I die.

No. You are tired. And you imagine god knows what treasure in the suitcase. Perhaps, another life. It would be quite simple. Fit into the clothes, move on, check mate. Forevermore.

It sounds so cocksure, such an impossible adverb. It sounds like a preying bird, swooping down from the cliff, nipping away at the liver every hour, on the hour. You are half-asleep. Be quiet! Be quiet all of you! you tell the world, be quiet hunger! and be quiet thirst! be quiet moon behind the pale! be quiet! be quiet! be quiet!

You are asleep by the time you fall into the door. Be quiet! someone yells from down below.

On discovering that you are free

Waking up is hard to do. This sounds like a song from the sixties. No matter, breakfast awaits. Cereals and milk, the morning news. You have kept count of all the people killed so far, in movies and in plays, in cities and in countries. You add up the score, the favourite passing time. Finally, voilà.

On making love in videos with strangers: are they clean?

No trepidation. You are an inhabitant of margins anyway. Perhaps, a small hoodlum or a peddler of soft, soft drugs. Go

for the kill, with a swiss oyster knife. Hew, Hack, Slash and Gash it open, leave it forevermore with a scar. The final break that you deserve. Imagine the freedom. Just do it. Be quiet, you hear from above. It's the neighbour's cat, the tail trapped in the door. Your eyes swell up with tears. Smoke is in your eyes. Be quiet! Be quiet! It's the nympho from the other room. Don't move, you whisper to yourself. Be careful, you tell yourself in a jiffy. It could be an explosive. But, whose papers are these anyway?

Terra Infirma

1. do This I remember.
2. re I have always lived on a train.
3. me I was abandoned.
4. fa I was left in the bathroom. Third compartment.
5. sol I was raised by the Conductor.
6. la I have decided to live here. For the temperate climate.
7. si My world is a triangle.

On why things always make sense at the end

Oh no! It reads like this: Someone has left you a promissory note more likely it was stuck in the suitcase which could have been abandoned on the train and then left at the first available stop an attempt at communication while in

motion but what do you make of the papers if not that it is plausible that someone has lived all of his life on a train the train you took to get here that he lives in a triangle if his co-ordinates are true the three points are Mon and Ton and Ny Et which is credible since the people who board the train

starting from the day of birth, he was awake from Mon to Ton but slept from Ton to Ny Et. No, not that. Nor the list of people he has talked to. From Mr. Cartier to Mr. Cabot to Ms. Minnie. Nor the awful death of the Conductor, who stepped out too soon one day and crushed himself

against the post of light. Nor the accidents he has heard about, of other trains on other tracks. But this, this is what will put you back on the train this evening. Back to one of three stops. To find her. A little, yellow sticker which the rain washed away from the outside window. It is dutifully recorded in these pages for you. But you do not care for seductive words, only for the name

Charadeze

I have seen you over the years from the distance that joins my window to yours. And, over the years I have seen you grow old, always seated in the same seat. Often, I have smiled to the train leaving who

knows what angels what murders behind. That is why I sell these lottery papers; it's my work. They are promissory notes from the still past. But as I am writing this note today I know, as I walk into my dreams, that you will not come down to me, nor shall I take those steps towards you. I am also fixed in time. Yet, if you will read me in this sticky paper I also know you will shut your eyes with mire. In so doing, you will know my absence, recognize my desire

Terra Firma

You are here. Yes! ■



between Mon and Ton speak like the left-side of the track and that the people who board the train from Ton to Ny Et speak like the right-side of the track and that the people that board the train at Ny Et speak like the gurgle and swoosh of a toilet flushed you can prove it all

On why things cannot make sense, if we do not

Never mind the post scriptum. The vulgari eloquentia of dreams. You leaf through, you find it. No, not the sleep patterns that have this order:

A S A
S A S
A S A

BOOKS R US

Listening to our leaders you might think books were an essential item. The Mayor has just announced the new budget. In 1996 all the blather about the need for literacy produces nothing but *defunding* of city schools and libraries. For many children the public libraries serve two functions: safe haven and their access to books.

In New York, spending per child varies according to district, with by far the least going to the inner city child in the "hyper-segregated" schools. Wealthier districts generate additional income from property taxes and have more political clout. Many inner city schools have a great shortage of book and teachers can't assign homework.

In the U.S. about 20% of adults are functionally illiterate. This figure drops if you factor in literate foreign language speakers, but rises dramatically with slightly more demanding tests. About one million Americans are totally illiterate. Of the ninety million who are at a low level of literacy a majority described themselves as able to read and write "well" or "very well". Perhaps this is all they need or want, given the prospects. We now rank 49th among 136 United Nations member countries in literacy, a drop of 18 places since 1950.

One child in five is born in poverty. One half of all minority children are poor. These children are most likely to fail in school. Our leaders, far from investing in literacy instead promote the fast — growing industry of private prisons. We are getting closer to *Brave New World's* "optimum population," which was "...modelled on the iceberg — eight-ninths below the water line, one ninth above."

Close to one half of all U.S. adults don't read even one book a year.

Best sellers are pitched to a 7th grade reading level.

In a geography survey, U.S. high school seniors said the District of Columbia was in South America. Many of them couldn't place Canada.

In wealthy New York City the Mayor is happy to keep literacy in check. If more people could read the ballot he'd lose the election.

Si on s'en tient à ce que disent nos dirigeants, les livres sont essentiels. Le maire vient juste de présenter son nouveau budget. En 1996, le seul résultat des bavardages sur l'alphabétisation a été la coupure des fonds affectés aux écoles. Or, pour beaucoup d'enfants, les bibliothèques ont deux fonctions : un havre de paix et la seule possibilité d'accéder à des livres.

À New York, les dépenses par enfant varient d'un quartier à l'autre. Un minimum est octroyé aux écoles du centre-ville où la ségrégation fait rage. Les quartiers aisés ont naturellement plus de poids politique, grâce aux taxes générées par la propriété.

Dans beaucoup d'écoles du centre-ville, les livres sont une denrée rare et les enseignants se retrouvent incapables d'assigner des devoirs aux écoliers.

Aux États-Unis, environ 20 % des adultes sont virtuellement analphabètes. La situation s'améliore lorsque l'on questionne des personnes parlant des langues étrangères, mais se dégrade dramatiquement dès que les épreuves deviennent plus exigeantes.

Près d'un million d'États-Uniens sont complètement analphabètes. Des 19 millions qui ont une faible scolarité, une majorité se décrit comme capable de lire et écrire, « correctement » ou « très correctement ». Actuellement, les États-Unis se classent au 49^e rang des 156 pays membres des Nations-Unies, en matière d'alphabétisation, une chute marquée, par rapport au 31^e rang, en 1950.

Un enfant sur cinq naît dans la pauvreté. La moitié des enfants de minorités sont démunis. Ce sont ces enfants qui sont les plus susceptibles d'être des *décrocheurs*. Nos dirigeants, loin d'investir dans l'alphabétisation, encouragent plutôt le développement rapide des prisons privées. Nous nous rapprochons de l'« optimum de population » décrit dans *Brave New World's* « ...modèle comme un iceberg, huit neuvième sous l'eau, un neuvième au-dessus. »

Près de la moitié des adultes ne lisent même pas un livre par an. Les best-sellers s'adressent à un lecteur ayant un niveau de septième du primaire.

À une enquête, réalisée sur l'ensemble des écoles secondaires des États-Unis, les finissants répondirent que le district de Columbia se trouvait en Amérique du Sud. Beaucoup d'entre-eux étaient incapables de situer le Canada.

Dans New York la Prospère, le maire préfère contrôler le niveau d'éducation, car si les gens savaient lire leur bulletin de vote, il perdrait son élection.

Escuchando a nuestros líderes uno puede pensar que los libros son un artículo de primera necesidad. El Alcalde ha anunciado recientemente el nuevo presupuesto. En 1996 alas tonterías dichas acerca de la necesidad de enseñar a leer y a escribir han producido nada mas que la pérdida del dinero con él que antes contaban las escuelas y bibliotecas de la ciudad. Para muchos niños las bibliotecas públicas realizan dos funciones: sirven de cielo protector, y de indispensable acceso a los libros.

En Nueva York, los gastos por niño varían de acuerdo al distrito, destinándose una ínfima parte de estos a los niños de los barrios pobres en las escuelas "hipersegregadas". Los distritos más ricos generan una ganancia adicional por los impuestos sobre la propiedad y tienen más influencia política. Muchas escuelas de los barrios pobres del centro de la ciudad tienen una gran escasez de libros y los maestros no pueden asignar tareas para la casa.

En E.U., cerca de un 20% de la población adulta es en la práctica analfabeta. Esta cifra disminuye si tomamos en cuenta los hablantes de lenguas extranjeras que saben leer y escribir, pero aumenta dramáticamente con pruebas solo un poco más difíciles. Cerca de un millón de norteamericanos son totalmente analfabetos. De los noventa millones que saben apenas leer y escribir, la mayoría de éstos se describen como competentes para leer y escribir "bien" o "muy bien". Tal vez dadas las perspectivas, esto es todo lo que ellos necesitan o quieren. Ahora, nosotros ocupamos el lugar 49 entre los 136 países de las Naciones Unidas en los índices de alfabetización; lo que representa una caída de 18 escalones desde el año 1950.

Uno de cada cinco niños nace en la miseria. La mitad de todos los niños de las minorías son pobres. Estos niños es muy probable que suspendan en la escuela. Nuestros líderes en lugar de invertir en la enseñanza promueven la floreciente industria de las prisiones privadas. Nos estamos acercando a la "población óptima" de *Brave New World*, la cual estaba "...moldada sobre un témpano de hielo ochenta y nueve por ciento debajo del nivel del mar, un nueve por ciento sobre la superficie."

Cerca de la mitad de toda la población adulta en los E.U., no lee ni siquiera un libro al año. Los Best-sellers están dirigidos a un lector de 7mo grado. En una encuesta de geografía los ancianos de nivel secundario dijeron que el Distrito de Columbia se encontraba en América del Sur, y muchos de ellos no pudieron ubicar Canadá. El Alcalde de la rica ciudad Nueva York está contento en mantener el control de los índices de analfabetismo. Si más personas pudieran leer las boletas, seguramente perdería las elecciones.

CANCOPY!

The Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency (CANCOPY) was established by Canadian artists', writer's to collect royalty for photocopying and to distribute it back to artists, writers and publishers. This article is of the Literary Translators' Association of Canada, held in Montreal, May 11, 1996.

ANTONINO MAZZA

In a telling item published in the Summer '94 Issue of the Cancopy Newsletter, Executive director, Andrew Martin, having attended several Annual General Meetings of member associations, puzzled over the apparent exasperation in the question frequently asked of him — "When do we get paid?"

To stem the growing misgivings, especially among disenchanted creator affiliates, in 1995, Cancopy initiated the very first drive since its founding in 1988 to distribute approximately \$125,280 of undesignated revenues, in the form of a \$50.00 payment to its 2000-odd creator affiliates across Canada.

As a creators' group, the Literary Translators' Association of Canada has never been sought after as a potential Member Organization of Cancopy. Nevertheless, many of our 120 members are individual affiliates of Cancopy, so they too were recipients of this first time ever BONANZA!

Of course, the *Droits d'auteur* of our members who reside and publish in Quebec are administered by UNeQ (l'Union des écrivains et écrivaines québécois). A precursory rating of how well literary translators in English Canada are being served by Cancopy, when it comes to receiving payments from the licensing of their copy-righted works, compared to our Quebec counterparts, is increasingly inevitable.

According to Rose-Marie LaFrance, Directrice du Service des droits, UNeQ began to distribute money to its affiliates back in 1984. (That is, all our members from Quebec who have licensed works through UNeQ, have been receiving money each year for the past 14 years). In 1995, there were 8000 creator and 450 publisher affiliates in the Quebec program. Total revenue for the year was about \$ 1,500,000. After administrative costs, (10 to 15% of revenue or approximately \$ 200,000), and RRO disbursements (a further 10 to 15 % for rights paid to foreign groups), Quebec affiliates received the balance of that year's rev-

enues. Of these funds, all undesignated revenues were distributed, "a forfait", (to authors and publishers who may not feature in the sampling but whose work is almost certainly being copied), 65% going to authors, and 35% going to publishers, such that each author in Quebec received about \$45 per published book in 1995, while an author of a translation received a 50% share of this amount. (That is, in 1995 alone, an affiliate Quebec "author" of say ten published books would have received about \$450.00, while a Quebec "Literary translator" affiliate, of an equal number of published books, would

have received \$225.00 from UNeQ).

We know of course the embarrassment of how the rest of us, Cancopy affiliates, did in 1995! Still, I thought to direct the same questions, as I had done with Rose-Marie LaFrance of UNeQ, to Cancopy's Communications Manager, Alexandra

CONCOPY?

associations to collectively administer their reproduction rights, including photocopying rights. Its mandate is preliminary comparative probe carried out by Antonino Mazza and presented at the annual general meeting

Soiseth. Once past the preliminary facts (that in 1995 Cancopy counted about 200 publishers and 2000 creator affiliates), addressing the financial figures became a much more arduous task to follow over the phone. So, Ms. Soiseth kindly provided me with Cancopy's 1994-1995 annual report, and two more recent Newsletters, by courier, from which I now quote.

In the financial year ending July 31, 1995, Cancopy's revenues totalled \$8,506,367, and spent \$2,335,397 on administrative and overhead costs (or 27.4% of total revenue). It distributed a total of \$919,997 in payment to rightsholders from pre-1994-1995 licences, leaving a balance in its bank account of \$7,851,348.

Interestingly, the financial report uses a pie graph to illustrate its revenue sources. There is no similar attempt, however, to show who the recipients were for the \$919,997 pay out. Except that Vol. 5, No. 3 of Cancopy's Newsletter, reveals a distribution of \$959,000 for that period — a different amount than was reported in the 1994-95 Annual Report itself — and that 34% of this money was distributed to rightsholders outside Canada, while 66%

went to domestic rightsholders. Still, no breakdown of how much money was paid to Canadian creators versus Canadian publishers, for example.

If these figures are any standard to go by, it would appear to a non-specialist that Cancopy is poised to spend as much as 55% to 65% of its yearly revenues for administration, overhead, and disbursements to foreign rightsholders. A far cry from the equitable lean machine UNeQ is reputed to have put in place for its creator affiliates from the very onset 14 years ago.

Cancopy has targeted \$6,000,000 for distribution in 1995-96. Don't hold your breath, however. By Cancopy's own admission, and I quote incoming chair, Peter Eliot Weiss (Cancopy Newsletter, Fall/Winter 1995): "The big word here is complexity. How to distribute this money is way more complex than people give it credit." Complex and difficult. Indeed!

Rather, the truth may be that Cancopy has become enviably adept at collecting huge fees on our behalf — from Federal and Provincial Governments, public schools, post-secondary institutions (58 university licences were signed in 1995), is even tar-

getting community colleges, public libraries, and now has set up a corporate licensing department to licence businesses, professional firms, and who knows what else? Haplessly, for Canadian authors and other creator affiliates, Cancopy's administrators have been as creative at identifying new opportunities to spend the exponentially growing revenues to run an ever expanding operation, as they have been resourceful in refraining from parting with large sums of money — which is rightfully ours — by conceiving some of the most eccentric administrative "loops" imaginable.

Here is how some of the undesignated revenues have evaded distribution so far. Writes, in the same annual report, Andrew Martin: "Cancopy maintains a reserve fund sufficient to allow for significant disruption of its revenue stream, to allow for uneven cash flow and, if necessary, to wind up the corporation without personal loss to its members, directors or affiliates. The level of the fund is reviewed regularly by the Board and the auditors. This fund increased by \$107,050 to \$1,823,389 during 1994-95."



Electronic Collage: G. V., Mégatexte

Nous aurions pu vivre heureux, les jours déposant sur nous la lourde caresse
afin de croire que le péripète recommence sans cesse. Nous aurions pu nous d

Books in the triangle

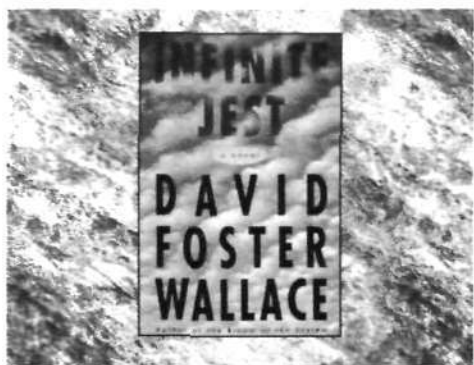
Infinite Jest

INFINITE JEST by David Foster Wallace,
Little, Brown New York, 1995,
1100 pages, \$40 CAN/\$29.99 US

This latest effort by David Foster Wallace, transports us into a mad hatter fictional world where national boundaries become a fixation of the past. Wallace depicts a continent (North America) well beyond the era of NAFTA, where O.N.A.N. (Organization of North American Nations) is the governing body, only perturbed by an underground Québécois separatist group calling itself Les Assassins des Fauteuils Roullent. This futuristic smorgasbord of the burlesque tale is generously spiced with a vibrant language all to the honor of Thomas Pynchon, Wallace's linguistic mentor.

In the true tradition of the storyteller, Wallace webs us a tale of imaginary hyperbole coupled, in the style of the *Commedia del arte*, with a unique sense of humour alternating between the tragic and the comic. New writing, new fiction, in tune with the rise of a new cultural generation. Good reading.

— D. Cuccioletta



Le gouvernement du sexe

CYBERSEXE. Les connexions dangereuses,
par Fulvio Caccia,
Éditions Boréal, 1995, 157 pages, 19,95 \$

Si la sexualité est au cœur de la représentation de beaucoup de sociétés, elle a toujours fourni un marché de la rareté sur lequel se sont construits de sacrés *business*, à travers le temps.

Là encore, il s'agit d'exploiter la technologie pour donner un semblant d'oxygène à cet instrument de contrôle social.



Point n'est question de la reproduction de l'espèce. Il s'agit d'aller plus loin dans l'usage de la cybernétique pour donner du confort à l'hédonisme. En plus, en ces temps de maladies sexuellement transmissibles pouvant entraîner la mort, cette sexualité correctrice vient apaiser certaines angoisses, c'est son slogan subtil, mais pose beaucoup de nouvelles questions.

Fulvio Caccia nous présente ce monde froid, en méditant sur le data glove et le casque de visualisation.

Et oui, le monde virtuel se met en place surnoisement, pour quadriller le « me, myself and I ». À vous de goûter au sex appeal de l'inorganique.

L'auteur nous informe sur toutes les subtilités techniques sans que cela ne prenne l'allure d'un manuel ardu. Du Minitel au WEB, en passant par le modem et le CD-ROM.

Derrière cette pléthore d'instruments se cache une nouvelle configuration de la société, qu'on peut encore lire à la façon de Marx :

« C'est uniquement l'ampleur du trafic et le nombre de téléchargements, bref ce qui a toujours constitué une des lois fondamentales du libéralisme — la mobilité du capital — qui déterminera le rayonnement et, ultérieurement, la survie de toute forme nouvelle de culture », écrit l'auteur.

Toutes les prostitutions et exploitations possibles sont atténuées sous prétexte de liberté de choix. Même la traite des blanches y est blanchie. Quant au chiffre d'affaires de cette gigantesque toile d'araignée, il justifie largement la charge de ses promoteurs. On peut ainsi méditer sur la fait que chacun des 5 plus importants Bulletin Board System des États-Unis réalise un chiffre d'affaires dépassant le million de dollars.

Si les rapports de genre en prennent encore un coup, il faut s'attendre à des bouleversements en profondeur dans l'espace et dans la définition des individus.

Mais il reste une chance : « Les conditions sont peut-être réunies aujourd'hui pour qu'une nouvelle citoyenneté, dépouillée de ses attributs habituels — nation, ethnie, race — puisse voir le jour », conclut Fulvio Caccia.

Un excellent tour d'horizon de ce vers quoi on va, sans s'en rendre compte...

— K. Moutarrif

Get a Life

GET A LIFE, by Wayne Roberts and Susan Brandum, Get a Life Publishing House, 1996, 316 pages, \$19.95 CAN,

Get A Life is a book about ecological entrepreneurship. In a time when all information around the environment is still focused on dire predictions, this book offers a ray of hope through creative enterprises aimed at solving some of the conflicts between industry and environmental activists. It dispels the erroneous notion that putting the environment first leads directly to a decline in corporate gains. The book is sectioned into ten principles, the ten commandments of a new generation, a new spirit of doing business that buries the orthodox economies and springs forth with visionary examples on every front, industrial, communal and private. Each project details ways of making a living not by traditional rationalisation of cutting, reducing and eventually eliminating but by integrating, growing and creating. It promotes technologies that evolve in harmony with natural systems, stochastic rather than linear approaches. It introduces the notion of a cultural capital where emphasis is placed on the human skill and creativity and less on exploitation of the Earth's resources. It incorporates Paul Hawken's insights into ways of moving to a least-cost system from a least-price one and thereby assuring more jobs for greater manpower is required. A grassroots strategy is proposed in attaining alternative solutions to the wasteful ones of the past. The accumulation of a common wealth whereby the exploitative, manipulative and destructive bottom line processes may be replaced with life-supporting ones. The book is like a breath of fresh air that invigorates us into action. Available from, 2255B Queen St. East, Suite 127, Toronto, Ontario, M4E 1G3.

— D. D'Alessandro

Sentenced to Travel

THE PILLARS OF HERCULES, A GRAND TOUR OF THE MEDITERRANEAN by Paul Theroux. G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1995, 511 pages, \$27.50US/\$37.50 CAN

For seventeen months, Paul Theroux traipsed around the Mediterranean basin, from the Spanish Costa del Sol, by way of the French Riviera, Croatia, Italy, Greece and Turkey to Syria, and back again, via Israel, Cyprus, Egypt and Tunisia, to Morocco... He lived to tell the tale. Reading the account of rides on rickety ferries, unrestful night-train travel, stints on luxury cruise ships, and much time spent in various guest-houses, I reflected on the potential effects of accumulated hotel and restaurant food. It strikes me that the author has a steel-clad stomach, as part of a firm constitution.

The story he wrote is compelling. Neither astounding, nor brilliant, nor very enlightening culturally or politically, but spell-binding. Theroux likes "to poke his nose into things." His writing moves along at a very steady clip and as you are absorbing it, it takes your mind off whatever pressing cares you may have. Notably, you may start reading in the middle, at the end, or even at the beginning of this volume and you'll just want to read on.

It is as if the author is under a strict, self-imposed sentence to march; something of a present-day galley-slave. (an old Mediterranean cliché.) Beneath a perceptible uniformization brought about by communications and the diffusion of technologies around the shores of this "mother of civilization", local cultures are still ticking. So are puzzling, intractable conflicts in the Balkans, North Africa and the Middle East. The traveller, alert, if not very erudite, makes it through Mediterranean thick and thin.

We get to meet a gallery of dozens of characters crossing Theroux's path along his somewhat aimless wanderings. A bisexual Syrian medical student; a depressed, improbable Belgian-Israeli musician of no fixed domicile; a retired Turkish air-force general, *connoisseur* of tantalizing, infuriating dirty jokes of the Levant... we delight in countless such pleasant mini flash portraits.

An American couple from Boca Raton, met on the luxury cruiser "The Seabourne Spirit", will travel next year to, (they chirp)... "Rio J. De Niro." Theroux has an ear for the funny line. Descriptions often are unfair, but amusing: "Malta had the culture of South London, in a landscape like Lebanon", some English package-tour tourists encountered in Corfu, are "the genuine, sun-burned, beer-swilling article..." Mediterranean light makes its way into the prose at all times, although the journey takes place in the rainy seasons, fall and winter - a nice change from those sunny, cloying picture postcard vistas! The places seem that much more three-dimensional.

We catch glimpses of offbeat realities: Croatia in the grip of civil war paranoia and plagued by economic standstill (in early 1994), the utter dereliction of Albania; the easy-going, devil-may-care attitude towards the law, and a kind of gentleness, as the underpinning for Tangiers *dolce vita*, for those intrepid enough, sensuous enough, and lazy enough, to want to live there.

In travelling, the great thing is that you can create afresh a new "yourself", every day. Contacts are superficial, not enmeshed in problematic social realities. Fantasy becomes real. The imagination is in the landscape. Theroux communicates these feelings and their flipside: a sense of alienation, guilt, loss of bearings...

— A. Seleanu

On Our Civilization

THE UNCONSCIOUS CIVILIZATION, by John Ralston Saul
House of Anansi Press, Toronto, 1995, 199 pages, \$13.95

Recently *The Unconscious Civilization* won the Gordon Montador Award and no doubt it is worthy of such an honour. However, this collection of Saul's C.B.C. 1995 Massey Lectures will dismay many. Although dressed up in fine new clothes, the thoughts and inspirations are rather old-fashioned, but perhaps our times deserve as much. His plea is to go back to a purer state; to assume our responsibilities to democracy by remembering what democracy was all about in the first place.

In a book where the Citizen is once again placed in a starring role and a critical questioning mind is the central driving force, Saul himself never has any doubts, and that makes me restless. His sincere prose dips into the sources of our present malaise in a patient and lucid manner. All is explained and everything can work out in the end. Yes! There is a happy ending and Saul remains as mischievous as ever. This book deserves to spark debate but I wonder if it will.

One wishes that Saul had taken more risks and dealt with the raggedy ends of our social conscience and existence. I like Saul best when he is the young child with a long beard, asking why the sky is blue, while the old man points with a gnarled finger to the emerging rainbow beyond the mountains. But I can't help but think most of those mountains are covered in blood.

— R. Akstinis



how insensitive RUSSELL SMITH

"Russell Smith is the pony-tailed bad boy of the literary scene, an outsider unafraid to puncture the institutions and personalities of his adoptive home."

The Globe and Mail

"How insensitive of [Russell Smith] then to hang about in our poseur clubs, eat in our overpriced dining establishments, apply for our grants — and then lampoon the whole thing as if he were somehow above it all."

NOW weekly

"The horror, the horror. Russell Smith's remarkable first novel, the nicely titled *How insensitive*, takes me back, kicking and screaming, to that savage, Bacardi-soaked, drug-addled angst haze that was my early 20s."

The Toronto Sun

sewn paper 264pp ISBN 0-88984-143-8 \$16.95

Nous aurions pu vivre heureux, les jours déposant sur nous la lourde
 caresse de la fin. Nous aurions pu toujours voyager, effacer nos pas derrière
 nous. Nous aurions pu nous croquer les uns les autres, nous boucher
 peuvent en contenir. Mais ce sera toujours à la mort que nous pourrions

Books in the triangle

Exocet

Paris reste la rampe de lancement pour l'écrivain étranger et *a fortiori* francophone. Conspuée ou courtisée, la Ville Lumière s'en fout. « Fais-moi rêver », dit-elle. Mais comment ? (Octave Crémazie écrivait des pages très lucides à ce sujet.) On croit s'envoler comme le poisson volant mais c'est parfois le missile sol-air qui frappe. À bon enten-

LA DÉMARCHE DU CRABE, Monique Larue, roman, Éditions Boréal, Montréal, 1996, 221 pages, 19,95 \$

Avec *La démarche du crabe*, son quatrième roman, Monique Larue se hisse sans tambours ni trompettes parmi les meilleurs écrivains de sa génération. Dans un style sobre, presque laconique, la romancière raconte les (dernières ?) années de la vie de Luc-Azade Santerre, dentiste de son état, dont la vie bascule lorsque surgit Sarah, la fille naturelle de sa meilleure amie d'enfance, Michelle, désormais perdue de vue. Le journal dont il entreprend la rédaction le conduit au cœur de la mémoire où se bousculent non seulement les souvenirs collec-

tifs de sa génération (l'Expo, la contre-culture, le 15 novembre 1976), les souvenirs personnels (sa mère est aussi une fille naturelle), mais aussi ceux plus anciens qui président à la formation de l'ancienne colonie d'Amérique du Nord et dont le nom du père interdit constitue le ressort fondateur. Ainsi en nous parlant de la mère, c'est paradoxalement du père dont il est ici question. Après *Agonie* de Jacques Brault, *Le vieux chagrin* de Jacques Poulin et *Le fou du père* de Robert Lalonde, Larue poursuit, en l'amplifiant, la perspective inaugurée voici cinquante ans par une Gabrielle Roy. En quoi consiste-t-elle ? à dénouer les liens qui rattachent le récit à l'origine.

LES AURORES MONTRÉALES, Monique Proulx, nouvelles, Éditions Boréal, Montréal, 1996, 239 pages, 19,95 \$

L'origine — les origines pour être exact — est bien aussi le thème récurrent, décliné par l'autre Monique, dans les 28 nouvelles des *Aurores Montréalaises* dont la critique québécoise a fait l'éloge intempestif. Mais au lieu de prendre ses distances avec ces origines, la romancière s'y coule avec délectation. Habile, elle utilisera non sans effi-

cacité dramatique celles de l'autre, pour confronter la sienne. Les mésaventures de l'immigrant, chinois, latino ou italo, du SDF, de la jeune prostituée, tracent le mailage d'une identité en mouvement que la double expérience de la crise et de l'*American Way of Life* auraient fait exploser. L'espace d'un instant l'on se prend à rêver. La nouvelliste aurait-elle succombé à l'inquiétante étrangeté du « grand désordre universel » montréalais ? Certaines nouvelles nous invitent à le croire. Ainsi le truculent *Fucking bourgeois*, dont la finale « mansfieldienne » étonne pas sa concision, ou encore *Allô*, troublant et méditatif. Mais à la longue cette galerie de portraits finit pour montrer le jupon du procédé et l'astucieuse entreprise de récupération idéologique à laquelle elle renvoie. Les dédicaces judicieusement distribuées (Micone, Foglia, Laferrière, Cady) signalent bien plus que l'apparent dialogue identitaire : la volonté de ne pas se faire déborder sur cette question névralgique. Pour rester maîtresse du jeu identitaire, Proulx va jusqu'à figer ses personnages dans leurs rôles et dans un ennui très « Fin de siècle ». Dommage.

— Fulvio Caccia, Paris

Cinema

Mille Bolle Blu

From the opening shot of *Mille Bolle Blu*, the feature film debut of Leone Pompucci, the ochre and sun-orange drenched set announces "nostalgia". In fact we are in 1961 Rome, where luminous white sheets are still hung to dry on the roof tops of condominiums and children swoop through them, flying arms outstretched like lines of sparrows.

It is the day of the solar eclipse and the lives of the residents are chronicled, mostly through the eyes of Sandrino (Matteo Fadda), a nine year old boy who weaves through the lives of the residents; Elvira prepares for her wedding as her former lover waits at a nearby bar for an opportunity to speak to her and perhaps change her mind; Guido, a blind man living with his mother waits to remove the bandages from an operation that may restore his sight; Caligiuri escapes from jail to be with his wife for their sexual appetite for each other is insatiable; Decio, Gina and Tecla fantasize about their inheritance and the opportunities it will offer them while their dead father lies in bed, grieved only by Sara, the maid and her son, a child with Down's Syndrome.



Pompucci takes us on a journey with his camera, up to another apartment, in through the doors, descending to the street and running behind the children as they run in and amongst the sheets. As a first film, *Mille Bolle Blu*, delivers some memorable moments (the scene of the children staging a farting competition is amusing, as is the tango choreographed by the two lovers as they make love to Mina's song of the title). It is, however, a lightweight debut with some stylish camera angles but little in terms of content. The nostalgia says perhaps more about a present poverty than anything about the past since the film is really anecdotal. As lovely as some of the moments are, the film never transcends its too precious nostalgia, remaining innocuous.

— Deborah Verginelli

BURRI AND FONTANA 1949-1968

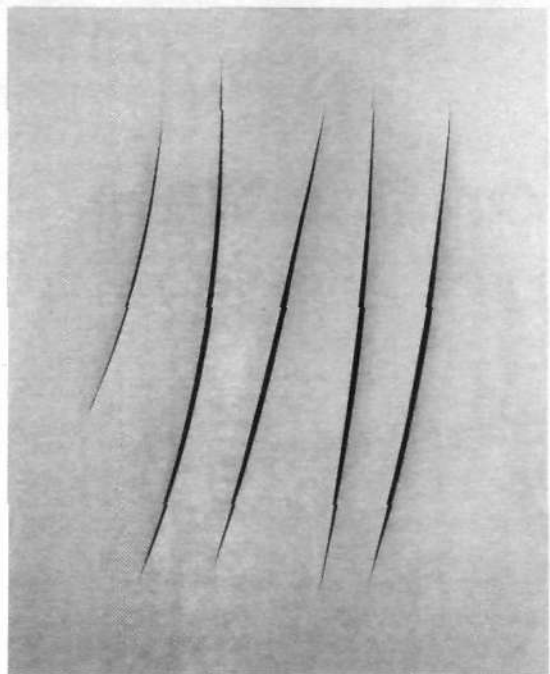
Exhibit at Pecci Museum, Prato, Italy
April 13 — June 30, 1996



Following the guidelines of the new program developed by the new artistic director, the Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci organized April 13th past, the influential show entitled: Burri e Fontana 1949-1968

This show was dedicated to the two major forces of contemporary art from post-war Italy. This Italian art movement of the 'dopoguerra' has strongly influenced the development of arts in Europe and abroad from the 50's- 60's and up to the present.

The event was organized in collaboration with Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri di Città di Castello and Fondazione Lucio Fontana di Milano and curated by Bruno Corà, art director of the Pecci Museum.



The precursors Burri and Fontana

Rudi Fuchs

The direct precedents of *Arte Povera* were artists such as Fontana and Burri who had "opened the doors" immediately after the Second World War. The art of *Arte Povera* was inventive, hard and not "beautiful", in the sense of what was considered a "beautiful painting", in bourgeois circles. Contemporaneously, it was not even a free and fluent art like the mixture of Pop Art variants that were blown in from America and which had been taken up by the majority of the modern Italian population.(...)

Burri, Material as Form

Chiara Sarteanesi

It is worth recalling when it was that Burri decided to devote himself to painting. In 1943 he participated in the Second World War as an army medical officer. He

was taken prisoner in Morocco and sent to a concentration camp in Texas. It was here that he decided to abandon a well regarded and secure profession in favour of art. He frequently recounted that the only way of not thinking about what was going on around him was to dedicate every available moment to the painting that had taken such a hold on his imagination. This probably allowed him to experiment and to gain an understanding of his true vocation.

The paintings he completed whilst in the camp were figurative oils and already revealed the painter's particular interest in colour which he laid heavily and vibrantly onto canvases that at times were as coarse as the paint was thick. Having returned to Italy, from 1946 he dedicated himself to painting, abandoning the medical profession. Some of the paintings he completed whilst a prisoner of war were exhibited in 1947 at the Galleria Margherita in Rome. But by the following year, the works exhibited in another exhibition at the same gallery were abstracts. Two

canvases from 1952 introduce this exhibition, *Studio per lo Strappo* (Studio for the Tear) that Fontana acquired after having admired it at the 1952 Venice Biennial and *Lo Strappo* (The Tear) hung at the New York Museum of Modern Art where, in 1966, Burri and Fontana exhibited together. Two personalities with contrasting temperaments; Burri reserved and solitary, Fontana extrovert. One disinclined to talk about his work, the other the author of manifestos in which he openly declared his convictions. Both absolutely free of any restriction, arriving at totally different results through different idioms, both stim-

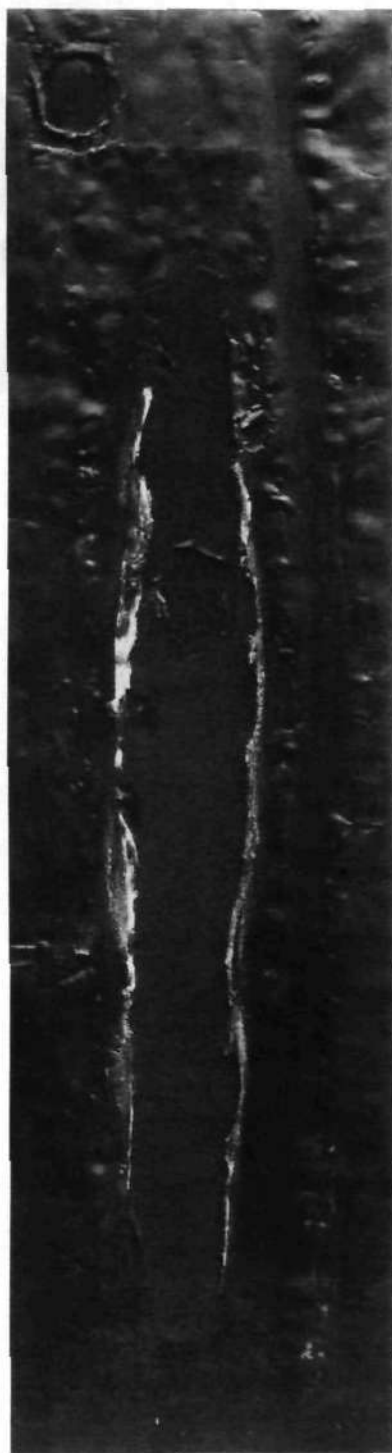
ulating the work of the younger generations. (...)

Matter existence nature

Spatial Concept. 65 T 136

Jole de Sanna

Matter for Fontana, was relative to the creator whose instrument is form. It derives from what is a redefinition of matter by way of the instrument of the creator — that of form. Contained in the sequence is the vital passage of art following the *Manifesto Blanco* regarding the preceding supporting thesis of modern art in which the relativistic tie of matter was formulated with respect to space and time *tout court*. The artist found at the apex of the matter-form triangulation is the reason for the sole title in Fontana after 1947: *Concetto spaziale* (Spatial Concept). The matter which is realized by way of the form gives back the sense of the old *substantial form*, the sense for which the soul is the *substantial form* of a body in that it makes it being. And also referred back to this by no means secondary implication is the title 65 T 136 and the circularity of the nexus that follow and that pass, in a ny case, by way of nature. (...)



LEFT: Lucio Fontana / *Concetto Spaziale*, Attese, 1963. Hydropainting on canvas, yellow. 100 x 81 cm

RIGHT: Alberto Burri / *Tutto Nero*, 1956. Acrylic, vinavil, combustion on canvas 190 x 54 cm

public domain where a new sensibility could assert itself?

From Europe comes one proposal. A friend and collaborator, Riccardo Petrella, who is very active in fusing transcultural energies, and is involved in the worldwide war against the savagery of the marketplace, told us during his last visit to Montreal, of the organization within a short time of a series of "village" meetings, the first of which is to be held in Italy this summer. These "villages" are made up of people who work in schools, factories, hospitals, communities and who come from all over the world. The aim is the same, it is the perspective that changes. These are simply meetings, nothing more than get-togethers...

Vice Versa will take part in this activity and will fill you in with the details in its next issue, via an article from Italy.

QUANTUM POLITICS **Cont'd p. 4** **Dalla pag 4 / Suite de la p. 4**

Una proposta viene dall'Europa. Riccardo Petrella un amico collaboratore, attivissimo nella concertazione delle energie transculturali e nella lotta contro l'economia selvaggia di mercato a livello planetario, di passaggio a Montréal, ci ha informati della prossima realizzazione di una serie di incontri di "villaggi", il primo dei quali si terrà quest'estate in Italia. I "villaggi" sono fatti di gente che lavora in scuole, fabbriche, ospedali, comunità provenienti da ogni parte del mondo. Incontri, semplici incontri. Gli oggetti sono gli stessi, è l'ottica che deve cambiare...

Vice Versa parteciperà a questa attività e vi informerà dettagliatamente nel prossimo numero con un articolo dall'Italia.

Se rencontrer et concerter des interventions dans le social où la nouvelle sensibilité s'affirme. Une proposition nous vient de l'Europe. L'ami collaborateur Riccardo Petrella, très actif dans la concertation des énergies transculturelles et dans la lutte contre l'économie sauvage de marché au niveau planétaire, lors de son dernier passage à Montréal, nous a annoncé la réalisation prochaine d'une série de rencontres de « villages » dont la première aura lieu en Italie cet été. Les « villages », ce sont des gens qui travaillent dans des écoles, des usines, des hôpitaux, des communautés et qui viennent de partout dans le monde. Les objets sont les mêmes, c'est l'optique qui doit changer. Ce ne sont que des rencontres, rien de plus que des rencontres...

Vice Versa participera à cette activité et vous en donnera les détails dans son prochain numéro avec un article provenant de l'Italie.

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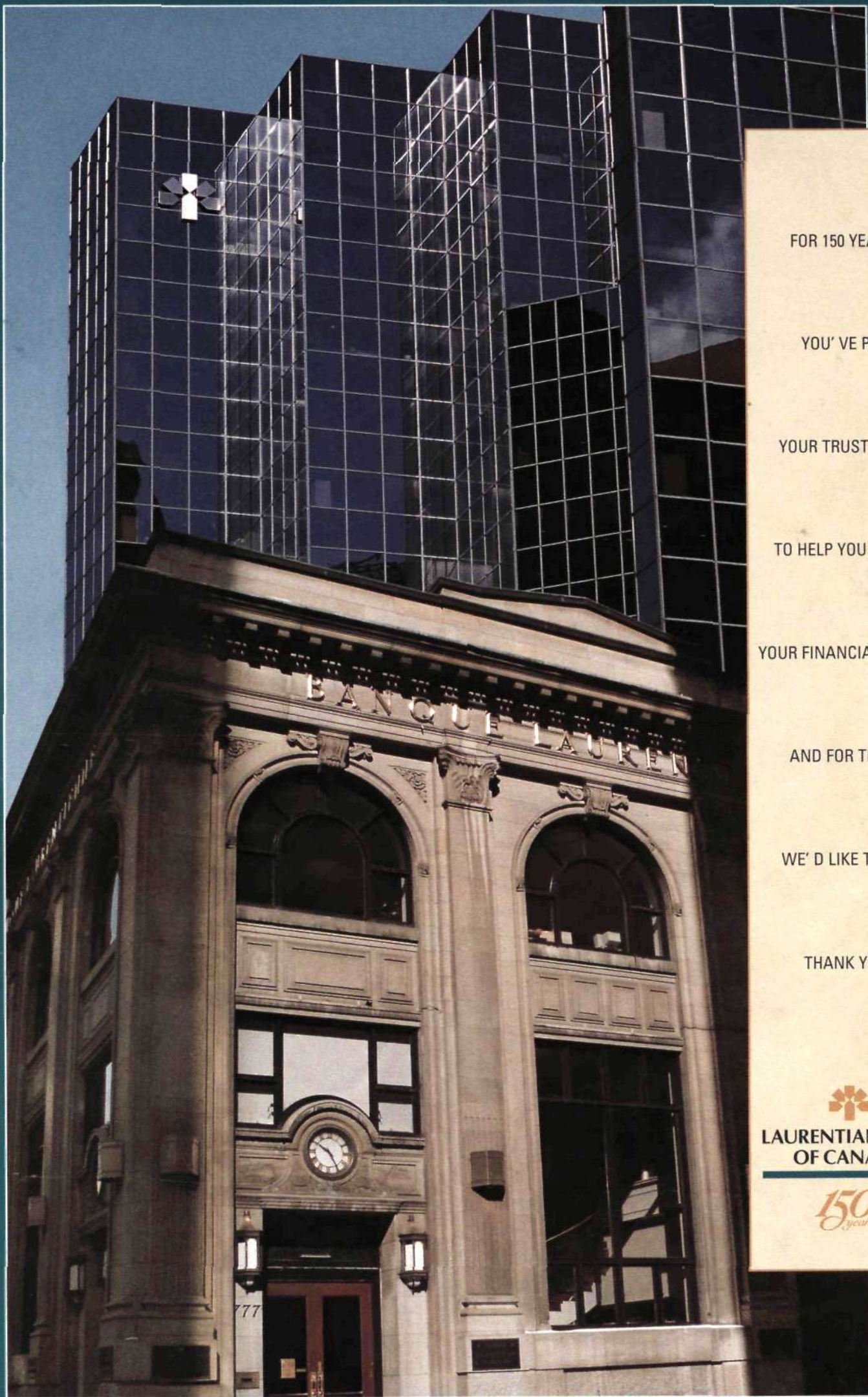
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